

MAR. 1953

Dynamic Science Fiction

132
PAGES



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by Cyril Judd

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Dynamic Science Fiction

Volume
One
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March
1953

Cover by Milton Luros

ROBERT W. LOWNDES, Editor

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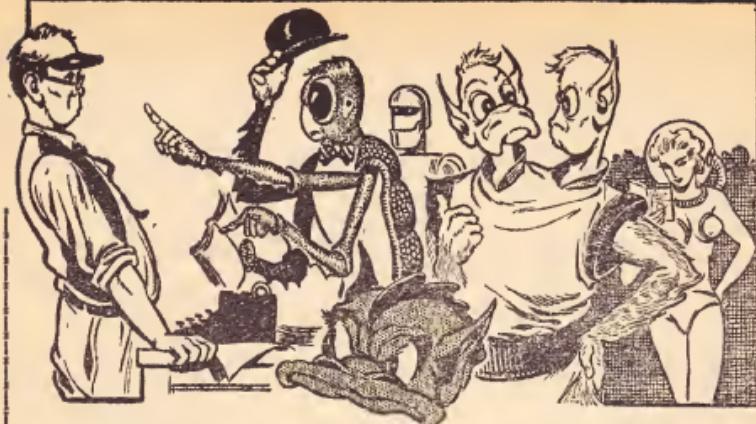
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Illustrations by Kiemle, Luros, Murphy, and Orban

(Next Issue On Sale April 1st)

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THE LOBBY

A Department For Science Fictionists



OUR letters and voting-coupons are still pouring in as this is being typed, so I can only make a partial report on the jury's findings. Notably absent, however, have been complaints about the cover-picture itself

—although a few weren't happy over the amount of type on it. For reassurance, see the present cover; we haven't reverted to a former policy—we merely wanted to list some good names on the first issue, and we're sorry we did it after we saw the finished job.

As the returns go to date, the comments in favor of the type of article we used in the first issue is about 50% in front of unfavorable opinion. Some who didn't care for the idea of using articles based on "science-fiction"

science, preferred that we run the straight "popular science" type of article, while an equal number of dissidents urged that we forget the whole thing and drop articles completely. A number who approved our article-type, in principle, suggested that we go easy on the heavy math angle; such was our intent. (My fingers are usually so thick with rubber cement, that I can't wiggle them fast enough to read equations and such, anyway.)

It's 1½ to 1 in favor of the book review department, too, at the moment. Some who voted against it, explained that they'd rather have other departments substituted, in *Dynamics*, while continuing the book review department in *Future*, and/or *Science Fiction Quarterly*.

Outside of a couple dissents, the artwork in our first issue seems to have been rather well liked—and apparently "Lurid" Luros has begun to reach

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the point where his science-fiction illustrations please the majority, on the whole. Now that the flesh doesn't have to flash in each and every picture, Milt's been concentrating on the important meat of science-fiction artwork; and if an occasional illo misses, by your lights, now and then, it's just a momentary slip. You can blame me, too, because I approve them before they go through.

Departments requested include fan-magazine reviews, a "personals" column, and science-fiction cartoon. More votes needed. I raised the question of fan magazine reviews in the February *Science Fiction Quarterly*, so you can take that opportunity to let me know. Whether there are enough fan-publications, issued frequently enough, to fill a department in each of our books I must confess I do not know; I've seen very few fan magazines in the past year or so, and haven't paid too much attention to the review-columns on them elsewhere. The "personals" column, frankly, does not strike me as being right for a magazine of this nature—but if enough of you want it, it can be added. As to science-fiction cartoons: well, I feel much the same way about them as I do about the "personals" thing. (Most of the ones I've seen haven't been very funny.)

Credit-lines for illustrators have been requested; that is one item I can deliver on right away, and I think it's a good idea. (We had them for a time in *Future*, some of you may recall. What happened was that the lines were omitted in one issue, due to extra-hectic circumstances here, and readers didn't seem to notice—so I never got around to restoring them. It was an unintentional blank test, you might say.)

Oh, yes—before I forget: one reader objected strongly to science-fiction with a detective-story background, such as "Public Enemy" and there was one plea to drop the letters department before it got started. (Not from Nan Warner, I might add; the

gal seems to have been converted.)

Let's see, anything more in the minority reports, to date? Yes—a request to have the covers blocked off (as with *Astounding*, *Space Science Fiction*, *Galaxy*, etc.) so that no type touches the picture. That's out of my orbit, but I'll see what can be done. One reader objected to the little spot pictures that appear scattered throughout the book, felt they weren't needed, and took up much space. We use them to dress the magazine up, and break up the monotony of solid type. If more of you feel they'd be better out, let's hear from you.

And, finally, there have been requests for background on authors appearing in each issue, as well as a special department for announcing things to come, and plugging our sister-publications. (Magazines, like ships, seem to be female. Perhaps because most editors are male, and the books have to be put to bed at a definite time.) On the first request, I'll see what I can do, but can't promise such material in every issue. On second matter, it's all a matter of display and filling up space at the end of stories; right now, I can only mutter in a vague way that I'll look into the question.

To wind this up, I want to thank each and every one of you who wrote in (many letters were received before the first issue appeared, but the schedule was such that I could not get any letters into "The Lobby", last time; the book had to be closed a day or so before the November issues of *Future* and *Science Fiction Quarterly* went on sale.) The response has been most encouraging and I'm going to have a job picking out the best letters, selecting the three which will bring the writers originals from Volume One, Number One. But your approval has been such that you'll be seeing *Dynamic Science Fiction* every other month, starting with the next (June, 1953) issue. Nuff said.

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A section of the wall ripped loose and a solid, glassy column of water smashed Haywood where he sat . . .

SEA - CHANGE

Feature Novelet Of Tomorrow

by Cyril Judd

(illustrated by Paul Orban)

The sea was now the source of metals, and each nation's Domes were vital. And the security-restrictions that had started with atomics, early in the century, were now something tremendous . . .



THE FAINT phosphorescence of the water fell away, flowing slowly at first, then with increasing speed, past the red markers on the wall of the lock-chamber. The level dropped ever more rapidly under the steady pressure of the incoming air, till at last there was nothing but a lingering circlet of moisture around the drain. Then that, too, disappeared into thick air. Literally thick . . . air at water-pressure, fifty fathoms down.

Lev Sloane waited without impatience, while the pressure in the chamber diminished. When the safe-signal chimed at last, inside the heavy glass of his helmet, he began to remove the bulky parts of his suit, but still with no haste.

Earnestly, he wished he had been able to find some real trouble in the plant. One time in ten, they had a genuine technical problem he could tackle . . . and solve. But four hours out in the seaside p'ent this afternoon, inspecting, testing, and examining, had turned up nothing but neglect — whether wilful or wanton, he did not know.

Sloane made his way from the wall-lock, through the soft illumination of spiralling corridors to the bathyvator-lock on the top level, avoiding the exec office by some forty extra feet of ramp. Haywood, the production-boss in Dome Baker, was a man of many certainties; when things got bad enough in his bailiwick to need a trouble-shooter from Research, he expected something definite in the way of diagnosis. And Lev had no answer to give him.

Stupidity or sabotage? How can you tell?

Such little things, always...corrosion, exposure, outworn parts. Such little things, always quickly remedied, seldom repeated just the same way. But every time they called him, there was something new; and each call meant production was down again. A drop of seawater in an oil-bearing motor, and the quota for the whole dome was unfilled. A carload of metal...ten carloads...sometimes a hundred, that never reached the factories. Incredible carelessness? Or criminal intent?

On a written report he could file the single word, "*Neglect*," and let the front-office worry over what lay behind it. But if he talked to Haywood, here on the job, he knew from experience what would happen.

A surmise, a gesture, an inflection, the very breath of a suspicion of sabotage, and you lost six months' work testifying at hearings. A word, a number, a name remembered, an offhand hint of carelessness in such-and-such a sector, and some poor slob of a junior assistant's helper lost his job to show that Something was Being Done.

Lev wanted no part of such decisions. He was an engineer, not a politico, or a smooth-faced personnel man. He avoided even friendly conversation with the bathyvator-operator, determined that this time they would get nothing from him but the bare facts of his technical inspection. He stood in gloomy silence at the

wide-vision port, as they emerged from the clear glow inside the dome, to the eerie translucence of the water outside; then up and up, through darkening strata, till penetrating streaks of sun began to reach them. They broke surface, and the autumn sunlight sparkled on blue waters with a surprisingly normal brilliance.

The operator looped a line across three feet of gently choppy water, and made fast to the bobbing platform of the small bright green convertible that waited nervously, all alone in the vast ocean where Lev had left it hours ago. Sloane hopped across; as he closed the door of the coupe behind him, he made a conscious effort to dismiss the nagging indecisions of the day's work.

While the engine warmed, he lit a cigarette and inhaled gratefully. Smoking was not so much forbidden as frowned upon in the manufactured oxygen down below; but it was impossible in a divers' suit. He left the cigarette between his lips, gunned the motor, and swooped off the oceanbed in a fine spray of disdain. Tonight, in his own apartment, he would write his neat, precise report—and let them make of it what they would. It was no problem of his now.

The small plane nosed eagerly into the sky; Lev Sloane sat back in contentment, as the warmth of the sun beat through the clean clear plastic against his face.

DUSK FELL on the city while he ate a leisurely and satisfying dinner. When he emerged from the restaurant, the orange incandescence of newly-lit sodium-lamps was reflected and repeated everywhere from glass shop-fronts, in lucite lampposts, and on the shimmering plastenamel bodies of the slow-moving stream of cars.

Another fifteen minutes, and the warming sodium vapors would shed a kindly yellow radiance on the wide thoroughfare. Meanwhile, Lev turned off to the sidestreets, where old-style

white lamps cast a feebler light at greater intervals.

He walked abstracted, in a mood of his own making, with the good meal behind him, his pleasant apartment ahead, and only the damned report still tickling the back of his mind. The streets were darker and narrower now, and that pleased him. Factories and warehouses, instead of tenements. Until he chose, of his own accord, to turn back to the main highway, he was alone in the city night, and the endless complexities of society were powerless to disturb him.

Then, out of nowhere, were pounding feet, and a hoarse voice cursing breathlessly. A shadow darted almost under his arm, and vanished in the dimness of a warehouse-entryway, and the heavy running footsteps thudded to a halt in the street behind.

"Which way'd he go?"

Lev turned around to face a short, thick man whose blunt features were concealed behind equal parts of stubble and grime. One sleeve of his shapeless sweater hung flat at his side, tucked loosely into baggy trousers; the good arm was knotted with muscles, visible even in the dim street light. And something—a brick?—was clenched in the stubby fist.

"Well, you seen him! Which way'd he go?" the angry one demanded.

"I'm not sure," Sloane said coolly. "Into some doorway, or around the corner; I didn't really see."

"Never catch 'em now," the man muttered. "Damn kids *snatching* alla time! I tell you they can smell metal, every one of 'em. They give me eight stores to watch; I can't be everywhere, and them kids'll know the one room's got some brass pipe in it, ten minutes after they bring the stuff in. Never get the brat now!". But his eyes kept searching, following every gleam of light into the doorways and hiding-places along the street.

Lev was beginning to understand. "It's a shame," he agreed automatically.

cally. "There ought to be some way to put a stop to it."

"I'll put a stop to it if he pokes his head out," the thick man said grimly. "Damn kids! And then I get the b'ame. Just leave me get my hands on 'em once," he swore violently. "You won't find 'em hanging around my place again." He looked sharply at Lev. "You sure you didn't see 'em? That's *metal* he snatched now, don't forget."

To his surprise, Lev found himself shaking his head in a vigorous negative. It was his duty to assist the watchman; he knew it. This was his first brush with an incident of the sort, but he'd read about it and heard about it for months.

SINCE THE beginning of this last drive for recovery of underground pipe, juvenile theft had come out of the psychologists' counsellor-rooms, and into the trial-judges' courts. Correction was good enough procedure when young delinquents were harming only other individuals. But more stringent punishment was indicated when they started snatching urgently-needed salvage metal.

It had to be stopped. Lev opened his mouth, and tried to shut away the mental image of a terrified youngster pressed into the darkness of the doorway, sweating out the seconds. Sentiment and sympathy had no place in continental security.

"Damn kids!" the watchman muttered with disgust, and turned to go before Lev could get the words out of his mouth to betray the thief. But the turn was hardly started when the thick man wheeled back, and something—a brick—flew from his fist to where the echo of a sigh had come from the blackness within a shadow.

There was one shrill yelp of anguish, and an indrawn breath that was not quite a sob. Then something clanged to the ground with the unmistakable resonance of metal on concrete; a wiry form darted out of the

doorway, scurried across the sidewalk, and became invisible again in the shadows along the opposite wall.

The thick-set man dashed after the vanishing noise of scurrying feet, and Sloane turned back the way he had come. He didn't want to wait till the watchman returned, didn't want to know whether the boy was caught. There was relief in him because his own inexcusable defection had been cancelled out; there was, too, a peculiarly strong distaste for the thick-set man, and an absurd worrisome feeling about the young culprit.

Just a few inches of copper pipe... easy enough for any youngster to run off with and easy for him to sell, too. Five inches of slender tubing grasped in a boy's hand; it meant more money than his father could make in a month. But even the fabulous prices on the metal-market didn't come close to the actual cost of unearthing the stuff from the depths of old cellars and tunnels far beneath the city. And financial investment was the smallest part of it; every inch of the stuff could be measured just as easily in terms of peace or war. Enough metal meant Continental security; not enough spelled certain defeat in an inevitable war.

APARTMENT 18-Q, the room-and Lev Sloane had rented when he first came to the city eight years earlier—and occupied steadily since—was in no way unusual. To the last fractional part of a square inch, its wall-space, floor space, and wall-fixtures were similar to those of four hundred and sixty-one other single units in the same building. But within those limitations, Sloane's place was most uniquely and thoughtfully his own. Every piece of furniture, each small convenience, the placement and relation of all the constituent parts of the room, bore the stamp of careful planning and equally careful use. The room-and was designed, specifically and functionally, to care for the physical and psychological needs of Lev Sloane.

Everything in it was intimately familiar to him; the surfaces were molded by his touch; the inner workings of all the mechanical objects had long since lost their secrets to him.

Still, as he opened the door this evening, the near-sense of danger and the unknown was sharply with him. The incident on the street had left him oddly exhilarated, more alive than usual. He wondered if it was the fleeting knowledge of guilt that had so affected him, and dismissed the notion with a smile. He could remember clearly enough how this same tingling awareness had come over him on his first visits to the Domes.

Adventure! he mocked himself, and had to remember once more that, to another person, his visit to the Dome today, his excursion through the processing plant outside the Dome on the sea-floor, would be vastly romantic and exciting. Fair enough, then, that an encounter with a street-urchin and a grimy watchman should perk up his own dulled perceptions.

He closed the door behind him, rather enjoying, now that he understood it, the dramatic sense of imminent menace.

From across the room, a voice spoke: "You will please, Senhor, make no unusual noises or movements. Turn on the light."



Dazed, half-convinced that this was no reality at all, Lev flicked the switch. In the corner armchair, a lean figure sat relaxed; the gun drooping from the stranger's hand seemed almost deadly for the casual ease with which it was held. Sloane had no slightest doubt that the owner of that gun could aim and fire, before he, himself, could complete any move to batte or escape.

"Who are you?" he asked, still too incredulous to be very frightened or angry.

"A friend." The lean man smiled, and exceptionally white teeth flashed in his dark face. "Or perhaps I should say—a messenger." It was not quite an accent, but American was not the man's native tongue.

Lev began to understand that this was really happening. Once you accepted the reality of it, the rest was not hard to understand. "A messenger from Latamer?" he asked.



"Please. I do not like the name. I am, yes, a Latin-American by birth. My country does not concern you. I come as a messenger of certain South-American Continental Interests... I am sure you have no desire to know their names as yet."

"That's where you're wrong," Lev said flatly. "But I don't imagine you're going to tell me. And you might as well save your breath, where your message is concerned. There are no Latamer messages that could be of interest to me."

The dark man in the chair smiled again and shrugged. "You are vehement, Mr. Sloane," he commented idly. "I wonder why."

"Because I don't like people who break into my apartment. Because I don't like Latamers much to start with. Because I don't like you, and I expect I wouldn't like you... Interests much either."

"More vehemence! Well..." He unfolded his length from the comfortable chair, and walked over to Lev, the gun still hanging limply from his wrist. "You will turn around, please? I dislike holding this lethal weapon while I talk. I would like to ascertain that you are not armed before I put it away."

SLOANE turned, and let himself be patted cautiously all over. When he turned back, his visitor had already slipped the gun into a pocket.

"All right," Lev told him. "Now get out. I don't want to hear whatever you came to say. Get out."

"You are so brave! But I'm afraid you overact. The role does not call for such heroics. Now listen sensibly, will you, dear fellow? Sit down; make yourself comfortable. This is your home, you know. I wish to say a few words; then, if you do not like it..." He shrugged. "I will go. If you like it, we will talk more. I think perhaps you will like it."

"I'm prejudiced," Lev said stiffly. "I don't like Latamers, and I don't like people who hold guns on me... it is my home, as you noticed."

"I am sorry for the gun. It was a necessary precaution, nothing more. It was not as a threat to you I carried it; we have no desire to harm you. But if I had not had it..." Again he shrugged, and smiled. "Think how it would be for me if you had been so heroic when you first came in."

Lev almost smiled back. The man was tight in a way; Sloane was dramatizing this thing more than was necessary. But, it suddenly occurred to him, so was his visitor. A secret agent should hardly look or act so much like one. Life, apparently, was determined to imitate art today...if you could call the movies art.

"All right," he said. "Go ahead and talk. Get it out. What's your... message?" He sat down on the edge of the couch, waiting.

"Ah, that's better." The dark man went back to his armchair. "I understand, Mr. Sloane, you are senior engineer for the Solute Metals work in this Continent?"

"I work for the SMRC," Sloane said. "I'm an engineer. What about it?"

"I am told also that you have been heard to voice certain sentiments of—ah—let me say a somewhat advanced nature?"

"Like what?"

"Concerning the exchange of scientific information."

Sloane stiffened. "I am," he said very carefully, "in favor of a somewhat more liberal policy in regard to information exchange."

"Ah, yes. Then we are in agreement. I have come only to discuss with you the means of effecting such an exchange."

"You're getting ahead of yourself," Lev put in drily. "I'm not so sure we agree about anything. My position on exchange is that of the Science Party—no more or less. I favor free exchange of non-classified matter with friendly governments, and limited exchange of classified matter...with friendly governments."

"It is so short-sighted," the dark man said sadly. "How do you know, Lev Sloane, who will be your friend tomorrow? No, I have a better notion. You can exchange now, freely, and... perhaps you would have some use for some small quantities of cash?"

"Get out!" Lev stood up and paced the floor to where the other man sat. "Get your filthy proposition out of here before I wring your neck!"

The gun was out again, a scant two feet from Lev's belly, and this time it was pointing.

"Back up!" the man snapped. Sloane backed. There was no civilized mockery in the threat now.

"We overestimated you," the visitor sighed; "we thought you had intelligence." He was out of the chair now, moving toward the door. "You would be wisest," he warned, "to make no move for ten minutes after I am gone. If you should be hurt, remember you were warned." The gun never wavered as he sidled up to the door, opened it, and slipped through it.

AS IT CLICKED shut, Lev leaped for the phone. He snapped on the audio and video simultaneously, and spun the dial around for the operator. As it made contact at the end of the long sweep, heat flashed through his

arm, followed by a single wave of unbearable pain. Then nothing, till he heard the loud report, perhaps a fraction of a second later, but it seemed like hours.

It was hours—five of them—before the reporters, the emergency medics, and the security-cops were all gone. With his testimony taken, his arm bandaged, and the various mis-spellings of his name carefully noted, Lev studied his bruised face in the bathroom mirror and chuckled. He wondered whether the spy, Ortega, had known how much noise that gadget made. If it didn't sound so much like gunfire, the fellow might have got scot-free. As it was, every plain cop and security-man within three blocks was headed toward the apartment the instant it happened, and anyone in the way was inevitably held and searched. Ortega's graceful gun betrayed him, even before Sloane told his story.

Lev looked from the mirror to the clock: two a.m., and there was still that godforsaken report to do. He settled himself at his desk, and, using the damaged arm to hold the paper down, began filling in the proper little squares as concisely as possible.

He made just one conception. The last little box said, as it always did: "*To what do you ascribe the trouble?*"

When he left the Dome that afternoon he had the answer all figured out, in a single word: "*Negligence.*" But things had been happening since then. Spies, sneak-thieves, sabotage...no, he had no proof of that.

"*Damned if I know,*" he printed in neat block letters. Then, before he could change his mind, he sealed the printed form and dropped it down the mailing chute.



THERE WAS a little personal mail for Lev when he woke up; he could see it from his bed, a

few sealed sheets waiting in the receiving-half of the chute, fluttering and floating on the updraft. It would only be bills and circulars. He punched for coffee and toast on the bedside Bachelor's Friend before picking the letters from the column of air.

Political circulars: keep us strong; vote for Gabble. Don't sell us out; vote for Gubble. Down with everybody except us; vote for Gobble.

Bills: Collections, Inc. reminded him that his monthly payment on his convertible would be due in only two weeks. Apartment rent due. Phone bill—he'd take that to work with him; some of his calls had been business and he'd have to put vouchers through on them.

And—an old-fashioned envelope addressed by old-fashioned typewriter. Return address (1347 Ave. Y, Wash., D.C.; he didn't know it) and delivery address were written out instead of code-punched. It must have been manually delivered, by a cursing mailman, instead of routed automatically by the switching system. He clumsily tore the envelope open and felt a pang go through him as his eyes fell on the signature at the bottom of the single-sheet letter.

Paul Barrios. He hadn't known he was still alive.

The Bachelor's Friend said in his own voice: "Teast and coffee ready. Get them while they're hot." Automatically he took the steaming cup from it and sipped, delaying on the letter. He felt a little ashamed of himself. Barrios. Ninety-plus at least. Fifty years ago the classic paper, *A Theory of Ion under Radiation Applied to the Differential Precipitation of Solute Metals in Sea-Water.*

And the old boy had meant *applied*.

To a dazed and metal-starved world he innocently showed his graphite tanks with sea-water circulating through them under the radiance of the simple little Barrios Tubes. He showed the world metals plating out onto the graphite from the sea-water. Vary the frequency of the Barrios

Radiation and you vary the metal recovered...it was the fantastic year that the Nobel Prizes in Physics, Chemistry and World Peace had gone to one man: Barrios.

Lev Sloane blinked and turned to the letter:

My Dear Sloane:

If you will forgive a rather old-fashioned and sentimental gesture, I want to wish you a happy birthday. Doubtless this is proof—if any were needed!—that I am growing senile, which is by definition largely a tendency to live in the past. I woke up the other morning with a vague conviction that I had done somebody a grave injustice, and it was twenty-four hours before I remembered when. Just fifteen years ago! It was that unhappy occasion which you may recall, when you stood for your doctor's oral before me at Columbia, and made some astoundingly inaccurate remarks, *apropos* of Solute Metal Recovery and I made some regrettably cutting remarks about Ph.D. candidates who were better suited to street-cleaning and the allied arts than to S.M.R. And I recalled, too, the pleasanter sequel when I learned that you had been celebrating your birthday the night before, and were unable to do yourself justice, re-examined you and had the pleasure of pronouncing you among the ten ablest S.M.R. men I had ever turned out. That verdict, my dear Sloane, still stands. I am pleased to see your name in the papers every so often as a mainstay of the S.M.R.C. technical branch, and to know that thereby you are playing a major part in the program that, God willing, will bring abundance and peace to our poor old world.

Sincerely yours,
Paul Barrios
S.M.R. Professor Emeritus
Columbia University

He felt a lump in his throat. Poor old genius emeritus, passed by as the younger men turned his science into engineering, as specialization multiplied until he couldn't grasp what was going on in the field he had pioneered. Writing nostalgic letters, on slight excuse—to be doing something with the brain that once had been the mightiest creative tool on Earth...

His own voice said from the Bachelor's Friend: "Hey, you lazy bum,

let's get this show on the road! Time to go to work. Hardnose Hennessey isn't going to like this." Sloane didn't feel funny. He switched off the voice-circuit and dressed slowly, favoring the bandaged arm.

SLOANE paused for a moment at the foot of a flight of marble steps, sighed and trudged up them, passed between the great Ionic columns of the Solute Metals Recovery Commission building, and on into the bustling lobby. He might have hunted up the small entrance where top-level administrators and authentically handicapped employees could get an elevator-ride, but it would have taken an argument.

The lobby clock said 9:03; Hardnose Hennessey—G. Mason Hennessey, Chief of Personnel, S.M.R.C. Grade 23—was not going to like it. Lev Sloane, Ph.D., Process Senior Engineer, S.M.R.C. Grade 18, decided that Hennessey could lump it; he had bruises and a bandage to show.

In his office he took a little kidding from the junior engineers and secretaries over his adventure; they showed him a bored little paragraph in the morning's newsroll. "Happens every day," he grunted, and disappeared into his private cubicle. Target for today was to block out an advisory for the Commission members themselves, a frank statement in broad terms understandable to the lay mind on the status of recovery processes.

He jotted down in shorthand: *Are processes satisfactory? Get figures metal output, graph vs. time. Get Central Intelligence estimates equivalent figures for Latamer, Africa, Europe, Sino-Russ. Brief Summary, three main extraction processes. Why three? Explain dome oxy-cycle. Status of extraction-process research; get figures from Research and Development, especially estimate of availability of halogen-reduction process. (This secret; observe security procedure.) Qualified opinion on—*

His phone lit up with the face of Hardnose Hennessey's very beautiful secretary, a young lady whose face and voice were one degree Kelvin above absolute zero as far as anybody below S.M.R.C. Grade 20 was concerned. "Mr. Sloane," she said, "Dr. Hennessey wishes to see you at your convenience." *Blink*, and the screen went off.

Mister Sloane! Doctor Hennessey! Hardnose was an honorary L.H.D. of some jerkwater Kansas college, and unblushingly used the title to the limit in his professional and social life. Sloane swore tiredly and then got up to go. "At your convenience" from a 23 to an 18 meant *now*. It couldn't be just coming in late; if the rest of the office knew about last night, so did Hardnose. That report, maybe, with the foolishly irritable answer on it? Kind of quick for that...

He expected the chilly secretary to tell him: "Please wait; Dr. Hennessey will be free shortly." Instead, she told him; "Go right in, Mr. Sloan, please." And—incredibly—she smiled at him.

Suspiciously, the engineer pushed open the plastic door of Hennessey's large, softly carpeted office.

"Come in, doctor!" boomed the Chief of Personnel. "I have a distinguished visitor whom I want you to meet."



She was distinguished indeed. In her early thirties. Tall, dark-skinned, with rather everted lips but the classic brow and nose of an Arab and straight—or straightened?—black, glossy hair. Her plain dress was prudishly high at the neck and low at the hem. That and the small silver triangle pendant on her bosom meant she was a practicing Ma'dite. He had met very few of them

and hoped his manners would be adequate.

"Miss Vanderpoel—Dr. Vanderpoel, I should say—may I present Dr. Sloane, one of our most valued technical men."

SLOANE smiled politely and extended his hand. She ignored it. Murmuring "*Salaam aleikum*," she touched brow, lip and heart and inclined her head. The engineer reddened and did the same, clumsily. She looked at him evenly and said, with a faint Dutch accent: "That is not necessary, Dr. Sloane. I am not an exchange-student, who eagerly gives up his own nation's ways; but neither do I tacitly impose my own nation's ways on my host. You may greet in in the future with what polite words you please, but you should not say the words of peace unless you mean them."

"Uh," said Hennessey, "Dr. Sloane is the fellow who acquitted himself so well with that Latamer agent. I trust you—"

"You told me all that, Mr. Hennessey," she said without inflection. "I will question him."

Hennessey hastily answered Sloane's inquiring glance. The engineer had never seen him so flustered. "Dr. Vanderpoel is a V.I.P., Sloane. She is, of course, an African, and her visit is part of an experimental program to exchange S.M.R. data between her government and ours. I thought you might be the best person to take her on a tour of one of our domes. She, ah, she wants to be sure—" He hesitated.

"I want to be quite sure," said the woman's precise voice, "that my guide is a qualified technical-man—"

"Yes, of course," Hennessey boomed heartily. "And I'm sure Dr. Sloane will satisfy you. He's rated one of the best in the country—academically, of course." You could hardly even call it a sneer, that faint depreciation as he qualified his praise. "Studied with Barrios himself, and I understand the Old

Man gave him an extra-high recommendation when he came to us. Do you still see him, Sloane?"

"I...heard from him today," Lev said with difficulty, and promptly took the edge off the boast by adding: "I haven't seen him for years." It was somehow offensive to have Barrios' name dragged in for display-purposes this way, after reading that letter this morning. Hardnose Hennessey probably didn't even know just what it was Paul Barrios had done.

"You know," Hennessey rattled on cheerfully, "the Old Man always favored more exchange of information. That's another reason I picked Dr. Sloane to guide you. I hear he's on the same bandwagon himself."

Sloane didn't need any help to catch the veiled threat in the smiling words. *Show her the dome*, Hennessey was saying. *Keep her happy. But keep your political notions out of it.*

"That is, I am sure, of great interest to you and Dr. Sloane," the lady V.I.P. said icily. "My interest, as I started to say earlier, is in obtaining a qualified technical-man to guide me—not a more-or-less-disguised public-relations person who will use my limited time trying to influence me, rather than give me information. I should like to have some time to talk to Dr. Sloane now...alone, if you please, Mr. Hennessey."

LEV WAS emphatically not looking forward to the rest of this business, but whatever came afterwards couldn't spoil this moment for him: he had the unadulterated pleasure of watching Hardnose Hennessey retreat, awkwardly, from his own office, under the frigid stare of a visiting V.I.P.

"Sit down, Dr. Sloane," she said as soon as the 'public-relations person' was gone. "And I hope you can be more informative than Mr. Hennessey."

"I'll try," he said drily. "If it's engineering you want to know about, I'll tell you all I can. You realize there

are some questions I may have to refuse to answer, without instructions from a higher level than Hennessey."

"Your loyalty to your country is not under question, Doctor; that is one of the primary reasons why you were selected. I am not so foolish as to believe it impossible that the North American S.M.R.C. harbors some persons who may be agents of either Latin America or the Asia Union. Your adventure of last night—as reported by the news-rolls and verified by the African embassy—indicates as clearly as possible that you are not one of those persons. Now if we can get down to facts..."

"I'll be glad to," he said stiffly. "I'm not much on political talk myself."

"Good." And she launched into a full hour of questions and answers covering every phase of dome operation. He had to remind her regularly: "I'm a processes-man, Miss Vanderpoel; that's outside my field," when she wanted to know about safety-measures and working-conditions. Again, she found herself saying with a frequency that seemed to surprise her: "I do not understand that, Doctor; perhaps you can amplify and explain it when I see it."

When, finally, she sat back in silence, and the interview was concluded, Lev was, almost beginning to like her. She certainly knew the field, and she had a rare talent for admitting her gaps of knowledge where they existed.

"I think I shall be more than satisfied with your guidance, Dr. Sloane," she said, and though imperiousness was apparently a basic part of her, there was less of it in this statement than at any time before. It returned in full force as she asked: "Is there some way to call that person back?"

Lev studied the blank-faced intercom on Hennessey's desk, and decided against the assumption of the prerogative. He went to the door, and addressed the request personally to the glamorous ice-maiden of a secretary.

"She's trying to find him," Lev told Miss Vanderpoel.

The V.I.P. sighed impatiently. "I hoped we could start the tour immediately," she said.

Sloane restrained a smile; he suspected the lady would not appreciate his amusement at her naivete. He hunted for an acceptably-polite way to explain to her that Domes could not possibly be entered that easily, that the law of the land required certain safeguards concerning visitors, no matter how important they were—

But she obviously wasn't going to listen. She took from a pocket in her dress a brown book with a silver triangle and a word in Arabic stamped on the cover, and began to read. *Sayings of the Ma'di*, he supposed—the African Bible. All right, let Hardnose tell her; Sloane wandered back to the outer office, and amused himself till Hennessey showed up—unexpectedly soon—by conducting an experiment to determine exactly how much ogling it took to make the beautiful secretary nervous.

"Miss Vanderpoel wants a Dome tour arranged *immediately*," Lev said, dead-pan when Hennessey rushed in.

"We're ready *immediately*," Hardnose said with considerable self-satisfaction. "I got ahead of her that time. State pitched in, and cleared her in record time; here's a pass for her." He handed Sloane a stainless-steel tag with Miss Vanderpoel's picture and thumbprint photographed onto it. Plastic protected it, and Sloane knew there was an invisible pattern of magnetized dots in the steel as well—though the trick was supposed to be ultra-secret.

They went back to the private office, and Hennessey glowed under Miss Vanderpoel's faint show of approval.

"I think Dome Baker would be the best bet," Sloane suggested, "I know it better than the others, and it's not far."

Hennessey nodded.

"Where is it?" the woman asked.

"Just ten miles off the Jersey coast,"



Lev told her. "I can drive you there myself in about an hour and we can have lunch in the Dome—if you wish."

"Very well." She gave the African salutation to Hennessy in parting, and they went down to pick up Sloane's car.

WALKING with him down the marble corridor she asked crisply: "What metals are extracted at your Dome Baker, Mr. Sloane?"

"Mostly iron—which makes it typical of the North American S.M.R.C. Iron's ninety percent of our output, of course. We buy our vanadium, chrome, tungsten—and so on for steel-making—from Europe. Naturally, we have mothballed Domes set up to turn them out in case Sino-Russia jumps Europe and shuts off our supply." He wondered if she'd comment on the politics of that. She didn't, and her face was unreadable.

"Another interesting point at Baker," he went on, nettled; "the first Barrios cell ever made is still in use there."

"Oh?" She was clearly not impressed. "I am under the impression that the Barrios cell has been much improved since the first model." It was a sneer.

"Naturally. It's a tribute to a great man."

"His work is done," she said briefly.

"You're very casual," Lev said with a hint of anger. "Paul Barrios was—is—a genius. You people owe him as much as we do."

Frostily, without breaking her stride, she said: "Dr. Sloane, it doesn't be-

come a person with your load of ancestral blood guilt to reproach me for a casual attitude toward one of your geniuses. The iron that Barrios found a new way to isolate was first given to man by my equatorial ancestors."

There was a warning of passion in her voice as she went on, and Sloane found it reassuring; she was human after all. "Your north-temperate ancestors," she said, "were most notably casual—to use your word—in wiping out several of my equatorial ancestors' cultures." They were passing between the Ionic columns of the S.M.R.C. Building. "And I notice that you have—casually—adopted architectural devices invented by my ancestors. Of course you call them 'Egyptian', pretending that Egypt was not a part of Africa and did not continuously exchange, culturally and genetically, with all its peoples."

"My car's in the parking-lot here," he said, and pointedly dropped the conversation; he wouldn't argue ethnology with her.

He drove his convertible to the S.M.R.C. flying field, underwent a fast overwater-readiness check and took off. Beside him, Miss Vanderpoel read her *Sayings of the Ma'di* as they droned northeast to the coast. In a quarter-hour she dozed off, with the book in her lap held open by her slender hands.

Sloane craned a little for a look at it. The graceful lines of Arabic meant nothing to him, but the condition of the book did. It was thoroughly thumbed and worn, from beginning to end—testimony that the woman was a serious believer in the Ma'di supposed to have lived, preached, worked wonders and died a century ago. He stole a glance at her face and thought with satisfaction: no wonder she believes—identification.

Her face had about the same blend of features attributed to the Ma'di in the hearsay, traditional portraits that even he had seen. Her face—the

Ma'di's traditional face—were epitomes of the Ma'di's preaching: Africa united, proud and forward-looking. Probably that cold, bad-tempered reply to his reproach had been in the best Ma'dite tradition. Certainly she'd had a good point: it was a fake and a swindle to make the traditional assumption that the achievements of Egypt owed nothing to the peoples of the desert, mountain, rainforest and grasslands.

He wondered whether the Ma'di had been essential to the unification and industrialization of Africa, or whether he'd been a side-show to an inevitable technical-economic process. About one hundred million believers thought the former—fiercely enough to make the great of the world profoundly glad that Ma'dism was by nature non-exportable, and by decree of its founder non-aggressive. Not even the tactless, backward, ferociously godless Sino-Russians claimed that Ma'dism was meddling with their internal affairs, a complaint they thundered regularly against every other major religion on Earth, and used often as pretext for a purge of unreliables.



SLOANE had to shake her gently awake as he homed on the radar beacon. She blinked and put away her book. "I should apologize," she said. "My time in this country is limited, and I have been using it to the full."

"No apology necessary," he assured her, and then was busy with landing, mooring and the transfer to the bathyvator. The bathyvator man, who had been unshaved and sloppily-dressed yesterday, now wore sparkingly clean coveralls and a couple of razor-nicks on his jaw.

"You've been advised about Miss Vanderpoel?" Sloane asked.

"Yes, sir. If I could just see her pass, we'll go right down."

She produced it and the man said: "Thank you, ma'am." Down they went, and the Security-guards at the bottom end were equally deferential. *Hennessee must have scared the daylights out of them*, Sloane thought.

As they stepped out of the guardroom—and from under the gun-slits, to Sloane's relief, as usual—Haywood hustled up to them. "A great pleasure, Miss Vanderpoel," he burbled. "I'll be happy to show you around my Dome—no eye like the master's eye, eh? No offense, Sloane."

The woman said: "It is precisely to avoid the possibility of your showing me around your Dome that Dr. Sloane has accompanied me—if I may say so without offense. I should like some lunch and then freedom to inspect, with Dr. Sloane as my guide."

Haywood managed to take it as a joke. "Topside gets all the gravy," he laughed painfully. "Sloane not only lives in a house and smokes when he wants to, but gets himself a good-looking girl to tour the Dome with."

Miss Vanderpoel looked at him as though he were a chimpanzee who had just asked for her hand in marriage. "My time is very limited," she said, "If we may have something to eat—?"

SHORTLY afterwards, they were seated alone in the minute cafeteria. The unsquashable Haywood was talking proudly: "We serve nine hundred meals a day here—in shifts of course. I pride myself on the highest safety-rating of any Dome in operation—by the S.M.P.C., of course. I suppose, though, we can't hold a candle to your African Domes." Sloane winced at his clumsy gallantry, but Miss Vanderpoel was merely puzzled. "Hold a candle?" she asked. "I do not understand the relevance." She was eating quickly and delicately.

"It means we aren't as good as the African Domes," Haywood explained largely. She said nothing, and he went on: "We're one thousand percent safe. That bulkhead you're leaning back against—half an inch of steel and plastic; on the other side seawater at unimaginable pressure, but you're safe as if you were in your mother's arms. Three warning-circuits slam W.T. doors compartmenting the Dome seconds after leakage occurs. Everywhere, instantly, available, are safety-suits."

"Where are the safety-suits in here, Mr. Haywood?" she asked.

He looked embarrassed. "It isn't S.M.P.C. Dome policy to provide them for diningrooms," he said. "Wouldn't do any good, I'm afraid. Imagine the place jammed with seventy-five people and a plate giving way. Thirty seconds to get into a safety-suit—if a man's kept up his drill the way he ought to. I'm very much afraid there'd be a panic and all lives lost, suits or not."

"We have suits in the public rooms of our Domes," Miss Vanderpoel said.

Sloane read in her face and words the contempt for dithering and hysteria, and the converse ideal of dignity and calm power. Haywood sensed a little of it and looked dubious. "Of course it's not a major point," he said. "Africa and North America are lucky enough to have stable subsea coastal ground. I'm damned if I'd go down into a Sino-Russ Dome in the Pacific, right smack on the Circle of Fire. And, of course, you never know with the censorship and lies what the Latamers are up to; but I hear they have some tom-fool business about Dome personnel making their wills and being *posthumously* decorated before they go downside. That smells like a terribly bad accident-rate to me. Of course you can get away with it if morale is high enough. Or, to be honest, your people are fanatics like the Latamer kids. But it's a hell of a way to get production, isn't it, Sloane?"

"It is, if true. On the other hand, I was in several European Domes—the

Adriatic Dome, the Tyrrhenian, the Cycladic and the Cnossos. They take safety seriously there. All personnel wear suits all the time. Three-day tours of duty only. Shut-down every month for inspection."

"Hell, they can afford it," said Haywood, annoyed. "They turn out a few kilograms of tungsten or vanadium a day. Here we're in *production*. What I think—"

They never found out what he thought.

WITH A NOISE that was half the roar of a seige-gun and half the shriek of a tortured animal, a section of the wall ripped loose and a solid, glassy column reaching from the wall smashed Haywood where he sat. Sloane was utterly paralyzed, hardly recognizing the stuff as water, for a split-second. Haywood was almost headless, and something had happened to the woman—she was floating limply awash in a foot of water fed by the roaring column.

He ducked under it, shuddering, seized her as an alarm-bell began to bong, and raced, splashing, for the door of the cafeteria, threading his way through the tables and chairs. He was a yard from it, with the woman in his arms when it slammed murderously shut. *Three warning-circuits slam W.T. doors...*

How long did he have—thirty seconds? The water was rising one foot in two seconds; his ear drums thudded inward as the air compressed, driven up by the water. *It isn't S.M.P.C. policy to provide them for dining-rooms...*

Sloane wrenched at the dogs, which had automatically turned as the door slammed, one-handed, with the woman on his bad arm. There were seven dogs, and the water was to his knees. He pounded with his fist at one, chest-high, and felt it sullenly turn. With the water at his waist, he pounded open a second and a third, cursing weakly, and the fourth and fifth, at the top of the W.T. door. He took a

deep, sobbing breath of the thick air and hauled himself down by the doorframe into the icy water, with his arm still cramped around the woman. He didn't remember how he turned the two remaining dogs; the next thing he knew, was that he was being swirled into the corridor adjoining the cafeteria, and was swimming one-handed for the red-painted breakaway panels where there were two safety suits. *Thirty seconds to get into a safety suit—if a man's kept up his drill the way he ought to...*

•

"Gobble the whobble numble."
 "Slump the anesthumbsia stroom."
 "Buzz pulse and huspiration buttle."
 "Quork the anode on the patient's wrist."

"Yes, doctor."
 "Pulse and respiration normal."
 "That does it. You can take him from here."

Sloane opened his eyes and tried to focus. Faces swam above him; one of them said: "How're you feeling, fella?"

"Rotten. What happened?" he croaked. "I remember swimming for the safety-suit panels..."

"Believe it or not, you made it."
 "Dr. Vanderpoel too?"
 "That's right. She's alive and you're a hero. They found the two of you bobbing up against the ceiling of the corridor compartment. Uh, Haywood didn't make it."

"I saw. When the plate blew... where am I?"

"Roosevelt Memorial Hospital, D.C. Want to tell us about the break-in for our records?"

LHIS EYES were working better, and the sensation was returning to his body. He saw three sympathetic-looking men in three chairs by his bedside; he was rolled over toward them a little, propped up with pillows along his back. He tried to move and was re-

strained by things that cut into his limbs and belly.

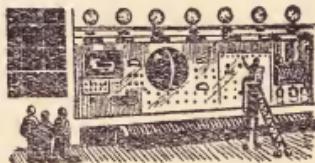
"What is this?" he asked, panicky. "Am I in a cast? Is my back all right?"

They laughed and one of them said: "No, no; you're all right. Should've told you; we gave you metrazol and globulin for shock. There's no metrazol-reaction history on you, but some people get the jerks from it."

"You mean I'm about to have convulsions so you tied me down? That was a dirty damned trick."

"Probably not, since the stuff's been in you for an hour now. But there's still a faint chance, so if you don't mind we really ought to keep the restrainers on a little longer. With them, nothing can happen. Without them—well, there's always the chance of fractured spinal discs before we got you under control."

Sloane shuddered and said: "Leave 'em on."



"Sensible man! Now, about the accident—from the beginning."

He told them about the accident, from the beginning. They asked him to tell it again from the beginning, in case anything else occurred to him. They pointed out that he might have unconsciously noticed some detail, or heard some noise that would have a bearing on the cause of the accident. He told it again, conscientiously filling in every scrap he remembered. Fine, they told him. This time they'd take it down in shorthand. If he'd just begin once more—

"What the hell is this?" he demanded, enraged. "You people are the damndest doctors I ever ran into."

One of them said, suddenly cold: "We're not doctors, Sloane; we're F.B.I. agents. *Ortega has squealed.*"

"Start talking, Sloane."

"The sooner the better if you know what's good for you."

"Ortega turned you in; why protect the other rats?"

"It's a dirty business, but it'll count for you if you cooperate."

"This is your chance to make up for some of the dirt you've done your country."

"Start talking, Sloane."

"*You're crazy!*" he shrilled at them; "what am I supposed to say?"

"He's ready to tell us about it. Turn on the tape."

"Tape's on. Go ahead, Sloane."

"Start with the first Latamer approach to you."

"Let me the hell alone, you damned fools!" he yelled. "I never heard of anything as idiotic as this!" Nor had he. And it was frightening, like the thought of a six-foot idiot who had conceived a dislike for you...

"He thinks we're bluffing. Get the tape on."

"Tape's on. Listen, Sloane."

HE HEARD a mechanically-reproduced voice, the almost-accented voice of Ortega, the theatrical Latamer agent. "—I make this confession of my own free will for the following reason: I understand that North American jurisprudence sometimes recognizes such cooperation as this with the authorities, as grounds for reduction of sentence. I have been asked to specify, however, that no person has promised that this will occur in my case, and this is true. Also, I have been asked to say that I have not been subjected to physical indignities or psychological duress other than what any reasonable person understands is normal and inevitable in police practice; this also is true.

"On September 17th I was advised by anonymous letter, bearing the correct code-designation, that I was to contact Mr. Lev Sloane, since he was sympathetic to our Latin-American cause. I waited for him that evening,

letting myself in by an omnikey. We talked agreeably and I found him a most enthusiastic friend of my government and its principals.

"In discussing how we might further our common end, Mr. Sloane suggested that he could be raised to a more effective position for sabotage in the S.M.R.C. if he were to distinguish himself for courage and patriotism. Bluntly, he suggested that I permit him to 'capture and expose' me. I demurred at this, but he persuaded me that my term would be only a short one, since he would not allege in court that I had done, or offered to do, any substantive damage to the American power. His glibness won me over, but I am now informed that I face a prison-term of twenty-five years on conviction, and therefore I am impelled to make this confession."

The voice stopped.

Sloane told them: "I have nothing to say about that, except that it's a pack of lies."

One of the F.B.I. men was looking over his head and grumbling: "I never did trust the damn things; where there's smoke there's fire."

Another of the agents suddenly thrust an object at him, yelling: "Have you ever seen this before?" It was an oxy-torch, pocket size.

"I haven't had an oxy-torch in my hand for ten years," he said flatly. "Maybe that's a torch I used ten years ago, so I can't answer the question positively."

"Wise guy," one of them muttered. The one looking over his head seemed glum and disappointed.

"Why did you cut open the Dome bulkhead?" the third demanded.

He laughed incredulously.

"It isn't funny, Sloane. This torch was found in the cafeteria. One man died and three hundred could have died—"

"What do you men think you are doing?" a cool, angry voice demanded. Dr. Vanderpoel.

"We're questioning a suspected

enemy agent, Miss. And from that bandage on your head, you'd better get back where you belong."

"Dr. Sloane saved my life and this is completely idiotic. Disconnect that lie-detector at once. Do you hear me?"

"I hear you all right, Miss, but I don't take orders from you."

"Call National 5-11783 immediately and appraise them of this situation," she snapped.

"How do you know that number?" asked an agent, astounded and suspicious.

"Never mind; call it."

One of them left silently and Sloane saw the woman come into his limited field of vision. She wore a bandage like a skull cap. "Salaam aleikum," she said to him. "I thank the One God, and his servant the Ma'di, that nothing worse has happened to you than questioning by these buffoons."

"You're all right?" he asked, trying to move.

"You will be free soon. Yes, thank you. A slight concussion from a fragment of the wall's plastic paneling. I was conscious intermittently throughout and can testify to your selflessness and courage. Do not worry about these people. Police are the same the world over. They are paid to do this sort of thing."

"Look, Miss—" one of the G-men growled.

"Watch it, Renshaw!" warned a voice from the door. "Miss Vanderpoel, the chief says I should apologize to you, and we should release Sloane. I apologize; Renshaw, get him out of the polygraph."

The agent who had phoned looked down malignantly at Sloane as Renshaw unbuckled the fake restrainers which had camouflaged a lie-detector's input pads. "Sloane," he said, "I've been ordered to release you as not responsible for the dome break-in on Miss Vanderpoel's say-so. On this other thing from Ortega, it's dubious enough for us to leave you at large;

without the Dome incident—which Miss Vanderpoel covers us on—there's no corroboration. Yet, I'm warning you now not to leave town. If you try, the D.C. police will pick you up for spitting on the sidewalk. As soon as you pay your fine they'll pick you up again for loitering. And so on. Come on, men."



THEY FILED disgustedly out with their polygraph as Sloane grinned and stretched his cramped limbs. The woman grabbed his bedside signal and pushed it ferociously. A thoroughly cowed nurse popped in, squeaking: "Yes, Miss Vanderpoel? What can I do for you?"

"Release-forms at once, please. And Dr. Sloane's clothes."

"Yes, Miss Vanderpoel!"

"Who are you, anyway?" he asked her when the nurse had gone.

She gave him an unexpected smile that was almost impish. "As Mr. Hennessey said, A Very Important Person."

"I'll let it go at that, doctor. But why are you so certain that I'm innocent of all this?"

"A simple matter of intercontinental relations," she said, gravely again. "The present world alignment is Sino-Russia and Latin America *versus* Europe and United Africa. The role of North America is to maintain the balance of power by throwing its support to the weaker of the two alliances. Because of Sino-Russia's immense manpower-reserves, and Latin America's plentiful supply of fanatics and raw-materials, North America judges that the Europe-Africa alliance is the weaker and so supports it."

"The great dream of the Sino-Rus-

sian and Latin American alliance is to win over Africa. They bombard us daily with propaganda—stupid propaganda, stressing the fact that the Chinese are yellow-skinned and many Latin-Americans brown-skinned. As if that were more important than cultural heritages!

"Failing in this positive appeal, they have evidently resorted to a negative attempt to split Africa from North America." She paused, broodingly. "My death, with the responsibility apparently North American, might have done it. I believe that the Dome accident was no accident, but an attempted murder by the Latin American and Sino-Russian alliance. I believe that you have been branded a Latin American agent because of your heroic rescue of me. In their propaganda they will represent it as a—Very Important Person—saved from death at the hands of the North Americans by a heroic agent of Latin America and Sino-Russia."

"Then you are in danger *now!*"

"I am," she said. "I have been in deadly danger since my incognito was penetrated by the Latin American spy-net in this country. I did not realize it had been broken until the Dome gave way."

The scared nurse came in with forms and Sloane's clothes, with the water wrinkles pressed out.

"I've already signed mine," she said. "Put your name here, dress and we can walk out."

He studied the form and its grim disclaimer of responsibility by the hospital. He signed it and asked: "I don't see the reasoning behind this..."

She moved a bedside chair two yards away, turned its back to him and sat in it. As he dressed, she told him: "I must get out of this place immediately. It would be too easy—there are poisons and surgical instruments in a hospital. I dare not go to our African Embassy; it is insufficiently-staffed, and not constructed to afford me safety. And above all, I dare not place my-

self under the protection of any North American officials. No matter how well I were guarded, there might be a mishap—and hours later there would be anti-North American riots and manifestos from Capetown to Alexandria. I trusted too much in my incognito. Perhaps—" For just a moment she showed a touch of indecision. "—I have been told I have a certain air of authority that might have betrayed me?"

"That might possibly be it," he agreed seriously. "I'm dressed now."

She rose and said: "Will you take me to the—the *unlikeliest* place you know? A place where nobody would dream of you appearing, but a place where there will be no complications or fuss about entry. No—don't tell me what it is, please."

"They must surely be watching the hospital. Won't we be followed—or shot down in the street?"

"Yes," she said. "That is why we shall leave by ambulance."



SHE HAD arranged it, too. Waiting on the roof was a nervous driver who demanded of Sloane: "Ya sure this is okay, Jack? I tried to say no, but—" He glanced at the woman and shrugged helplessly.

Twenty minutes later, the ambulance hooted as it hovered above the 1200 block of avenue W and landed when traffic stopped at the intersections. Miss Vanderpoel tottered out,

leaning heavily on Sloane's arm. There were ah's of sympathy from the crowd and the ambulance popped up into the air again on grasshopper legs.

When they rounded the corner, Miss Vanderpoel straightened and her walk became brisk. 1347 Avenue Y was a two-story brick home of faded elegance. Bare spots and improvisations of plastic where there had been brass bell-pulls, name-plates, graceful iron railings, foot scraper and other forgotten accessories dated it badly.

The old man opened the door himself, squinting into the afternoon light. "I'm afraid I can't make out your faces," he said in a voice that had grown thin and frail, but still had music in it. "You're—you're—?"

"Lev Sloane, Professor," said the engineer. "And a friend."

"Why, Sloane! How pleasant—please come in, and you, too—"

"Miss Vanderpoel."

"—Miss Vanderpoel, of course. How pleasant!" His stooped figure went before them down a dim entrance hall. "It's turning into quite a day for me. There are two other gentlemen here—but perhaps you knew?"

Lev stopped in mid-stride, slightly off-balance, and the girl stopped at the same instant.

"Who?" Sloane demanded.

"Why...a Mr. Haines, and a Mr. Adams. Do you know them? They were asking about you...?"

"Professor," Lev said rapidly and quietly. "I meant to explain this more gradually, but I'm afraid I've imposed on you. Miss Vanderpoel here is in some danger. I brought her here hoping to...to hide her. Is there any way...?"

"Company Professor?" A door opened into the hallway, and a competent-looking man stepped out, with a gun in his hand.

"Sir!" The old man turned on the intruder furiously. "Put that thing down. Have you forgotten you're a guest in my house? Put it down, sir,

and be so kind as to leave immediately."

"Happy to, Prof. In a few minutes. I think we've got what we were looking for. In here, everybody." It was a square, low-ceilinged living room, with casement windows that opened on a brick-walled backyard flower garden. A fire twinkled in a fabulous brass grate, and there was an equally fabulous stand of wrought-iron fire tools beside it. Lev Sloane remembered those: North America's gift to its savior, made from the first iron processed out of the first dome.

THE GUN directed them to a slip-covered sofa where Lev had spent uncounted afternoons in the distant schoolboy past, warming himself in front of the fire in the iron grate... and afire himself with the knowledge that old Barrios was giving him. The Professor ignored the pointing gun. Trembling with indignation, he collapsed into a club chair by a smoking stand where a wax taper burned in a holder. Adams' partner—Haines—helped himself to a cigar from the humidor on the stand, and puffed it alight at the taper, grinning.

At a threatening jerk from the man with the gun, Sloane sat down on the sofa. Slowly and regally, the girl settled herself next to him, smoothing her skirt as she sat, as if not crushing it were her only concern. Never in their brief acquaintance had Sloane seen her quite so imperious as now.

"Okay, now let's get the formalities over with," Adams said genially. "You, miss...you go by the name of Huyler-Ngomo?"

"No," she said steadily. "My name is Vanderpoel...Miss Vanderpoel."

"That one's good enough," Adams said. "Be hard to make any mistake. Not many girls around that look just like you. We've got orders to take you back with us. I hope you're not going to make any trouble."

"I haven't decided yet," she said indifferently.

"Well, make your mind up. We ain't got much time," Haines put in.

"Would it be too much to inquire whose orders you are following?" Dr. Barrios said from his chair.

"Security," Adams said, smiling.

"Your identification?" the girl demanded.

"Right here." The man patted his gun with his free hand.

"How did you know where to find us?" Lev asked suddenly.

"We didn't; we were hoping. Mostly we came to see if the Professor knew anything that would help. Now if the young lady will just come along, we won't have any trouble at all."

"You think we should leave them?" Adams put in, looking worried.

"Nobody said anything about two guys. We want the girl."

"Sure, but...okay, it's your neck as much as mine." Adams subsided, but he wasn't satisfied.

Old Barrios had gathered his poise again. "May I ask for what purpose you desire to have the lady's company?"

"Sure, you can ask," Haines said boredly. "Ready, Miss Vanderpoel?"

She stood up. "Yes," she said wearily. Sloane could see her hand moving through the wool fabric of her dress pocket, fingering the worn brown book, the "Meditations." Suddenly it was too much; there was a time not to be cautious.

"I'll tell you what for, Dr. Barrios; to kill her."

THE WORDS hung on the air. Then the Professor too stood up, and with the most ordinary manner crossed his room to the telephone.

"That's enough, Prof." Adams clicked off the safety of his gun audibly; Barrios was not so old that the sound was meaningless to him. He stopped and turned to face them; his slender shoulders sagging with defeat.

"A moment ago," he said thinly, "you were joking about my riches. I am rich, you know. I was a great

man once. What do you want? Name your price for the lady's ransom."

He slumped into the chair by the smoking stand.

"Everything you've got," Adams said promptly. "And then it wouldn't be enough. The Chief wouldn't like it if we came back without the lady."

"Do you know who I am?" the old man asked.

"Sure," Haines answered. "Everybody knows, even me. Barrios, SMRC. Mister SMRC, you might say. Ain't that right?"

"Yes," said Barrios sadly. "I have here—" His hand dipped into his breast pocket. The gun made a sudden alarmed jerk in his direction and then subsided as Barrios drew out a flimsy sheet of pink paper, folded. "I have here the fruit of my last fifteen years of work. The world thought I was a dodderer whom the parade has passed by. But summarized on this sheet is a practical method of multiplying the output of S.M.P. Domes ten times. Think about it a minute and see if you still think it's not enough to pay for a girl's life."

"That changes the picture," Adams admitted grimly, reaching out his hand. "Hand it over." And then he gasped. Barrios had darted the paper toward the candleflame, twitching it back with a wisp of smoke curling from one corner. Adams stared for a moment at the curl of smoke, and then his eyes swung back on Sloane and Miss Vanderpoel.

"Why didn't you sell this thing long ago?" he demanded suspiciously.

Barrios sighed. "I long ago lost ambition; I long ago lost my illusion that men would use metal for anything but making war. Ten times more metal, ten times as much death and agony. I would have given it to the world if I thought it was any use. But now there is a reason. It's yours... for the lady's life."

Adams was watching Sloane and the woman. His friend was staring at Bar-

rios. He muttered: "He was a big shot—"

"You are hesitating," said the triple Nobelist, with a touch of the old resonance in his voice. "Very well. The world does not know how to use it and you do not want it. Let it burn!"

He crumpled the paper in his hand and tossed it at the fire that twinkled in the grate.

"Get it, Chuck!" shrieked the replica, diving for the grate, and so did Adams, clawing at the coals.

Sloane landed on the small of Adams' back with both feet. The other killer snatched up Adams' dropped gun and rolled over, spraying bullets at full-automatic until a priceless wrought-iron fire poker smashed his hand. Miss Vanderpoel said to him as he screamed: "Lie there unless you want it in the head next." She twirled the poker.

"Lord," said Sloane, white-faced. "I killed him." He rolled Adams over, shrinking from the touch, and found the ball of flimsy pink paper crushed under his chest, only charred at the edges.

"We saved it, Professor!" he said triumphantly turning to the club chair. But Barrios was slumped far down with blood throbbing from his chest. He was making a curious chuckling noise and Sloane bent low to hear.

"Glad you came," he said, slowly but distinctly. "I was bored." Then he died. Sloane thrust the crumpled ball of paper into his pocket and turned to the gunman.

"You killed him," he said.

The man groaned and clutched his mashed hand.

"Who's your boss, fella?" Sloane said grimly. "I want to know who sends people like you out to kill people like us—and him."

The man groaned louder.

"I won't ask you twice," Sloane said. He took the wrought-iron tongs and thrust them into the heart of the fire. Miss Vanderpoel's face writhed, but she didn't speak.

FIVE MINUTES and three seconds later Haines was screaming: "I don't know his name! He's a tall fat guy who works for the Gov'ment! He meets me in the Dupont Circle Bar! He'll get me killed if he knows about this! He'll send his greasers with their knives! I swear I don't know his name!"

Sleane said thoughtfully: "Lots of tall, fat men work for the Government. I can think of one who was in a position to break your incognito. I can think of one whom I told about getting a letter from Professor Barrios. I can think of one who's in a position to seed Latin-American sympathizers through the entire S.M.P.C. and botch things as thoroughly as they've been botched."

He thrust the cooling tongs back into the fire, and the man screamed again at the thought.

"No more!" said Miss Vanderpoel, compulsively.

"Perhaps not...does your boss swear a lot? Blue-eyed? Sandy hair with a widow's peak in front that he combs over a bald crown? Big square front teeth? Like grey suits? Extra-big chronometer wrist-watch?"

He didn't need the tongs again. The man answered the right questions right and the catch questions right.

"Call that National number," he told her. "We have enough for a pick-up order on Hennessey."

She went to the hall and he heard the murmur of her voice at the phone.

Only when she came back did he remember the crumpled ball of paper in his pocket. He smoothed it open and found that it was a past-due laundry bill.



It was a lovely ceremony on the lawn of the African Embassy in the crisp fall air. The African Home Secretary for Science, Leila 'al-Mekhtub Waziri Huyler-Ngomu (after the Lata-mere spy roundup she had been able to

shed her ineffectual incognito) was a favorite target of the press photographers. She pinned the African Diamond Star, First Class, on Dr. Lev Sloane for courageous and selfless service to United Africa and made a little speech. Dr. Sloane spoke also, briefly, and concluded with the African salutation *salaam aleikum*, touching his brow, lips and breast with a graceful inclination of his head. The African guests were obviously moved by his sincerity, and the North American guests were obviously somewhat alarmed. Some of them murmured uneasily about Sloane's recent practice of dipping into the *Sayings of the Ma'di* at odd moments.

A lawn buffet followed, with couscous, Barbary sheep, antelope kebabs, plantain, scrambled ostrich eggs—two of them—curries in the style of the Durban Hindus and a rijstafel in the style of the Afrikanders.

Sloane had tasted the rijstafel, and hidden behind a transplanted jujube bush when he saw the Home Secretary for Science coming that way.

He saw her draw near and was about to come out when she too, simultaneously saw someone near and

imperiously hailed him: "Mr. Kalamba! Come here if you please!"

Mr. Kalamba, tall, young and worried-looking, did so.

"Salaam," he said nervously.

"Mr. Kalamba, I'm very displeased with you. Strictly you are not under my direction, but you are science attache to the embassy and I feel that this gives me a right to speak. Frankly, it has become notorious that you are running around with young North American persons."

Mr. Kalamba mumbled something.

"Tommyrot, my dear boy! You know perfectly well that I don't refer to legitimate contacts in the way of embassy business. I refer to your drinking beer and eating hamburgers with youngsters from the Commerce department, and Agriculture, and such."

"They're good chaps," muttered Mr. Kalamba.

"I dare say, but we must draw the line. Answer this question truthfully: would you want your sister to marry one?"

Lev Sloane didn't wait for Mr. Kalamba's answer.



Philadelphia in 1953

As most science-fictionists know, there's an annual convention for fantasy and science-fiction fans all over the world; in 1953, it will be held at the Bellevue Stratford Hotel, Philadelphia, Pa., September 5th, 6th, and 7th. The Philadelphia Science Fiction Society will administer the convention this year, but it is being sponsored by science-fiction clubs, and enthusiasts everywhere.

Membership in the Convention Society costs one dollar, and the membership card is the bearer's ticket of admission to the three-day shindig. Members receive full and frequent reports of arrangements to date, up to the time of the convention itself, including vital information on accommodations in Philadelphia during that period. The person to write to is Tom Clareson, 3731 Spruce St., Philadelphia 4, Penna.



The Galani surgeon's filamentine tentacles were at work.

"I want you to study the Galani, son, and take part in interplanetary politics. Inevitably there will be a judgment-day in which one planet or the other must be destroyed. Be in a strong position on that day; but until it comes, reserve judgment!"

SECRET INVASION

by Walter Kubilius

(illustrated by Paul Orban)

A Novella Of Strange Victory



THE STENCH of the rotting Galani corpse filled the air of the Interplanet Trust's warehouse. Its sickening fumes half-blinded the Planetary Defense agents that were hurriedly assembled for the court-martial, but James Gideon kept his spasmorod pressed against the

Captain's nervously-twitching back. His finger ached from the desire to press the trigger and kill the traitor. If spaceplane captains become Suspects, who could be trusted? Gideon's mind whirled at the thought of the Martian Galani succeeding in their determination to conquer the Earth.

"You may proceed," Chief McDonough, tough master head of Planetary Defense, said.

"I offer in evidence the customs declaration," PD Agent Ridenour said, his voice ringing hollowly in the darkened warehouse. Gideon watched him, so that his eyes would not look at the green tentacles sprawled crazily on the floor where a brownish mass exuded from the pus-covered gash in the blackened, tree-like body.

"It is signed," Ridenour went on, "by the three spaceplane officials, the Captain and the First and Second Mates of the Interplanet Trust. Each of them had examined the crate marked 'Medical Supplies' and each must have known it was being used to smuggle a Galani to the Earth."

The Captain moistened his parched, frightened lips. Gideon, who held the spasmorod pressed against his back, could feel the man tremble. "I am guilty," he said nervously, "only of gross negligence in not personally inspecting the cargo. I took the First Mate's word for the crate's contents and signed the declaration without thinking. In any event, I deny the jurisdiction of this court. A rocket-hangar and warehouse is no place for a trial; I demand counsel."

McDonough's brows bent and he pointed an angry finger at the Captain.

"There hasn't been a Martian on Earth since the end of the war in 2009, and that was about 250 years ago. This is the first case of a nearly-successful attempt to smuggle a Martian Galani through PD customs-inspection. The fact that it almost succeeded indicates a serious weakness in Planetary Defense."

The Chief looked around him—at Gideon, Hastings, Ridenour, and the other PD Agents, as well as the two Mates and Captain. He added quietly, "There are traitors among us."

"I—I am innocent," the Captain said, shaken by the knowledge that he was suspected of treason, and that either his First or Second Mates—

probably both—were Suspects, in Martian pay. "I demand the truth serum."

"Request granted," McDonough said, as Ridenour opened his PD kit, quickly, and took out the ready hypodermic. The Captain smiled weakly and rolled up his sleeves, while the First and Second Mates watched impassively. The dozen or so PD Agents, who had made the arrests when the spaceplane landed in the hangar, stepped forward curiously.

That moment of negligence was enough.

The First Mate stepped forward and locked his arm around the throat of the Agent in front of him; the spasmorod slipped from the Agent's holster, and a series of needle-like shots ripped through the cavernous warehouse. The Captain fell forward, his throat slashed open. Gideon felt the warm blood splash against him.

"A Suspect!" somebody screamed; "kill him!"

Red force-lines leaped through the air, piercing through the First Mate and the Agent he held in front of him.

"Idiots!" McDonough shouted, "use spasms! Take him alive!"

Ridenour lay crumpled against the wall, stemming the blood that seeped from a shoulder wound. The Second Mate's body was on the floor, a gaping mass where his forehead should be. A PD Agent, trusted aide of McDonough's, stood by the body with a grin on his face and the hammer of the spasmorod cocked for full-explosion.

"Too bad," he said, raising the blaster to his own face; "we almost succeeded." He pulled the trigger. The smashing blow splattered the warehouse with blood.

Gideon turned his face away, struggling against an overwhelming sickness. His eyeglasses steamed, and he tore them away to look blindly at the scene about him. It was not the sight of the five dead bodies that made him pale, but the truth which was not painfully evident. After 250 years of es-

pionage, the Galani had at last succeeded in turning loyal PD agents into betrayers of the Earth...

“DEFEATED again,” McDonough said bitterly, knowing that truth-serum was useless when Suspects were quick to commit suicide. He turned to the remaining members of the PD court-martial.

“Hastings, you prepare a faked report of a boiler explosion to account for the dead. James Gideon and Nick Ridenour will take over the investigation with full authority, and responsible only to me. Find out every contact these Suspects had in common. Track them down until we know how the Galani espionage system works. Go to Mars if necessary—but get results! Report to me in Washington. Court dismissed.”

James Gideon, ostensibly a news-reporter for Telefax Screens, spent the next week tracking down the past activities of the three planetary-freight officers, and the two PD Agents who had turned traitor. Index cards, listing every known physical action of these Suspects were assembled and then put through the Cyberneticon.

Gideon was faced with no easy task; but years of training had made him one of the select few Agents who were implicitly trusted by Chief McDonough. As a boy, Gideon had long been ashamed of the thick-rimmed glasses that nature had thrust upon him, but his father had been a wise man. “Never let anyone judge you by your eyes, or by any physical difference. It is the brain which matters—nothing else is important. Study! Study!”

James Gideon studied, and it was his knowledge of Galani history which finally led him into the ranks of the PD—that semi-secret organization that guarded the Earth in its silent, never-ending, never-erupting tension-filled relations with the Galani of Mars.

Over two centuries ago the Galani, a Martian species that was virtually immortal, was defeated after a long

atomic war that neither side desired nor provoked. Instead of submitting peacefully to the terms of a lenient treaty, Galani resistance continued until Earth lost all hope of peaceful collaboration between the planets.

The Treaty of 2009 provided for the dismantling of all Galani heavy industry and strict prohibition against inter-planetary travel. Planetary Defense, the intelligence arm of the Earth’s military forces during the war, continued to operate by keeping Galani activities under constant surveillance.

For several decades, PD activity was limited to customs-bases on Mars; but later, surprising things began to occur. Despite the obvious hatred which the Galani seemed to feel for Earth, an unusually large number of Earthmen and Earthwomen conducted espionage on behalf of Mars and the Galani.

These “Suspects”, as the PD called Earthmen who sold out to the Galani—for money, or other reasons—were becoming a powerful threat; it was PD’s job to find these Suspects and the links which bound them to Mars.

AFTER STUDYING the activity-tracings which the Cyberneticon made on the movements of the four dead Suspects, Gideon found the lead he was looking for.

“The Captain was apparently innocent,” Gideon said, when he reported his findings to his immediate superior—Nick Ridenour—at the PD substation disguised as Ridenour’s apartment; “but the two Mates and traitor-PDs must have formed a single Suspect cell; the Cyberneticon shows their spatial-time tracks to meet on five different occasions.”

“That doesn’t help any,” Ridenour said; “what we have to find is their contact with Mars. And—most important of all—how were they recruited?”

“No children or close relatives who would be used as hostages,” Gideon said; “if they joined it must have been of their own free wills. There doesn’t

seem to be any hold the Galani can get on them. However here's a lead that might be their contact with Galani."

"Not more of us in the PD? Oh no!"

"No," Gideon said; "McDonough has ordered truth-serum for the whole corps; that should clean the traitors out. Each of the Suspects was a patient of an Earth-doctor, Dr. S. T. Fellbank."

"Coincidence?"

"Not when free medical service is available through PD, and there is a good doctor on every rocket."

"Fellbank, Fellbank," Ridenour mused; "just a minute while I check the files." He switched on the Microcard Index, a series of screens immediately lighting up on his desk. He scrawled the name on a piece of paper, inserted it in a slot; in Washington, three hundred miles away, the complete files of PD, photographically scanned by telebeams, flashed across the screens on Ridenour's desk. He stopped the flow, snapped the "Copy" button and a photostatic duplicate of the dossier inched out of a slot. He tore it off the roll, skimmed through it and passed it on to Gideon.

"Read that last paragraph," he said sourly.

The greatest threat to civilization is the human race. What does an objective study of our history show? In the 275 years of interplanetary travel, we have completely destroyed seven distinct species in aggressive war on Venus, and two on Jupiter. What is even more horrible is our record on Mars. Not only did we hell-bomb a peace-loving people in 2007, but we have virtually enslaved the greatest race the universe has ever known—the Martian Galani.

Excerpt from speech delivered by Dr. S. T. Fellbank at the Society for the Defense of Martian Culture. January 9, 2257

James Gideon fingered his spectacles as he read the report. "A suspect, definitely; he's our man."

"He's *your* man," Ridenour corrected. "I'm assigning Hastings to help you; find all you can about him. In-

cidentally, have you ever been to Mars?"

"Definitely not, and you couldn't drag me there. My health is good and I wouldn't care to have those Galani doctors go over me, despite the miracles they've done."

"Well, when you contact Fellbank, your orders are to go to Mars."

"Now, Nick, have a heart!"

"That's orders, Gideon. As a Telefax reporter, you may get leads which PD Agent Munnheim—operating at Deimosport—has been unable to find. When you get there, look into this matter of disappearing Galani. Munnheim reports that there's a suspiciously big increase in the accidental-death rate. These eight-foot monsters are practically immortal; when they start dying off, there's something wrong. It might be a hidden civil war between an aggressive, vengeance-minded group and a more intelligent segment which realizes that war between the planets would mean the destruction of one or the other. Latest disappearance is that military writer Sko—So—what's his name?"

"Scho-La-Nui?"

"Right. He's about a thousand years old. I guess. He's the author of that military classic *Enemy Infiltration*, now being used as a textbook by PD. Find out if he's been murdered, or smuggled to Earth."

Gideon looked at him sarcastically. "You wouldn't have something else I could do—in my spare time?"



IN HIS ROLE as Telefax reporter, Gideon made an appointment to see Dr. Fellbank for an article on Galani surgical techniques being made suitable for use by Earth doctors. Fellbank was cooperative, and Gideon found it hard to believe

that this mild-mannered physician was a Suspect—a traitor to his planet. Surely, Fellbank was intelligent enough to see through the hypocrisy of Galani propaganda. There was a possibility that he was operating as a Suspect against his will. A truth serum test was impractical, but Gideon hoped that the radio-jammer hidden in his briefcase would indicate electronic-wave thought-control. When the interview was over, Gideon turned the conversation to a discussion of general Galani medical skills.

"Would the Galani be able to handle advanced myopia cases?" he asked. "My vision is 20/900. It's not that I mind wearing glasses—but in my Telefax work, it's a terrific nuisance."



"The operation," Dr. Fellbank said, "is absurdly simple for a Martian. Microscopic tentacles are inserted through the eye-apertures; the muscles around the eyeball are tightened so that the eyeball is shortened, bringing the retina nearer to the lens. I have examined dozens of such cases and all have been successful. Of course, the operation is impossible for an Earth surgeon, who must use instruments."

"Would it be possible for me to go to Mars for such treatment? I have tried contact-lenses, but I can't get used to them."

Fellbank shook his head as if surprised at Gideon's naivete, "There's a waiting list, two years long, of Earthmen seeking admission to Galani hospitals. They're very selective on Mars and usually operate only on influential and highly-placed people."

"I'd be willing to pay the added expenses in order to get treatment earlier."

Dr. Fellbank ignored the subtle bribe. "I'll pass your name on to the Admissions Committee on Mars, headed by my former professor, Mel-El-Aben, but I doubt if it will do you any good. Good-day, sir."

ON HIS WAY back to the office, following the interview, Gideon paused at the Ninth Incline, waiting for the express. A group of school-girls cluttered around him as they waited for the Sidewalk to stop. When he climbed on and walked towards a seat, the substitute briefcase was already in position for him; the two were swiftly exchanged, and he went on his way. The original case, containing the radio-jammer and other equipment, would be taken to a PD lab, and Gideon would have the report delivered to him at the next PD sub-station.

There was still the problem of getting a blood-specimen on Dr. Fellbank; one had to consider the possibility of drugs. Gideon did not dare risk a court-order, requesting a complete checkup on Dr. Fellbank's medical-identity card. He would be alarmed, and his contacts warned—or he might end as a suicide, taking his secrets with him.

Towards noon, Gideon came to a Music Center and approached one of the uniformed attendants.

"Do you have the latest color-sensory symphony by Quinxon?"

"Saturn Dreams?"

"I'm not quite sure, but I think it is expressed algebraically."

"Of course," the attendant smiled, "M. C. Square. This way, please."

He led him to one of the many booths that lined the wall of the Center. Inside, where the sensory symphonies were induced by drugs, Gideon and Hastings sat down.

"Fellbank was a cold fish," Gideon said; "he didn't bite at my offer of a bribe to get me to Mars. Got any reports on his background?"

"Not much that PD files don't already have," Hastings said, dropping

the guise of a sensory-image guider. "He visited Mars in 2243 as an Oppenheimer scholar. Spent six months at the University, where he studied under Mel-El-Aben. His closest Martian friend—strangely enough—turned out to be the Martian general, Scho-La-Nui."

"One of the Galani on our 'missing list'. Evidently Dr. Fellbank became a Suspect on Mars quite rapidly. What more?"

"After returning to Earth, he practiced internal medicine at State Hospital here. In three years he became State's finest physician, with a terrifically big private practice among Upper-Upper-Class people; he takes in pretty sizeable fees."

"Just a bright boy out to make good, huh? Any indication that he may be paid regularly by the Galani?"

"None whatever; that's the tough nut to crack. No vices; no hobbies; no interest in anything but his work. Never known to gamble. Frugal taste. Lives in a cheap four room apartment."

"With his prestige and position, he could afford the best. Is he a miser?"

"I had recordings of all his personal and telephonic conversations psychoed by the cybernetic staff. Fellbank's quite normal outside a fanatic devotion to the Galani cause—as if he were a Galani himself."

"Yet, he's obviously not," Gideon said, perplexed by the paradox of an Earthman acting and thinking as if he were a tentacled Galani with a tree-like body eight feet high, and possessing a cellular-construction utterly alien to any species ever evolved on Earth.

"He has one bank-account with 4,000 bilars," Hastings went on; "his salary is 2,000 a year and private practice nets him anywhere from 12 to 50,000 a year."

"What does he do with it? He has no big expenses whatever, unless the money is used to finance whatever Suspect cells are under his supervision."

A green light flashed in the small room. Hastings turned on the screen and Ridenour's face appeared. "The report on your trip to Fellbank has just come through," he said. "The equipment in your briefcase showed no indication whatever of electronic thought-control. No evidence of drugging, if examination of air exhaled from his lungs means anything."

"What about blood?" Gideon asked.

Ridenour nodded. "We got a sample by faking a small accident. Completely normal; no drugs. Apparently Fellbank is a Suspect of his own free will. But wait a minute—there's an added notation on the report saying that the blood-sample showed an unusually high oxygen-content. No significance, though."

"Okay," Gideon said, sighing. He took off his glasses, and rubbed his eyes. "If the Galani can talk a man like Fellbank into betraying his planet, I think it's high time we swept the whole place clean. There must be 20 or 30 rocket-ports all set to do the job."

Ridenour scowled. "Project Victory is highly secret. Keep that big mouth of yours closed; if the Galani ever get information on the location of the rocket-platforms, and the central control-room, they'll move the universe in order to sabotage them. Sign off."

"Sign off."

The screens cleared as Gideon and Hastings bent over the mass of reports, trying to trace the Galani network on Earth. It was a heart-breaking task for it meant looking for traitors among humans who seemingly had no reason whatever to betray their world. Gideon, in particular, found it hard to understand why Earthmen turned Suspect—despite the many years he had spent studying Galani history and psychology. The tentacled tree-men of Mars had always fascinated him. Perhaps this was the influence of his father, Tom Gideon, who was a spaceman at heart, though he never left the Earth's surface.

James Gideon was born and bred in

an atmosphere impregnated with Galani themes. "Reserve judgment on the Martian planet," his father had told him when James was still a boy, "I want you to study the Galani, and take part in interplanetary politics. Inevitably there will be a judgment-day in which one planet or the other must be destroyed. Be in a strong position on that day; but until it comes, reserve judgment!"

He had kept part of his father's plans for him. He had gravitated towards Planetary Defense, and rose high in its councils. In one thing alone did he fail old Tom; he did not reserve judgment. Familiarity with information gathered by PD convinced him that the Galani were merciless monsters, fanatically dedicated to the future annihilation of the human race. How could old Tom have failed to realize that? He shuddered at the implications...

DR. FELLBANK televised him on the following evening at his home.

"You've been quite lucky," the doctor said when his image cleared on the screen. "One of my patients suffered an accident which will make it impossible for her to leave the planet. She had a reservation on the next rocket, and it's yours if you want it."

Gideon tried to appear hesitant. "I...think I can get a substitute to fill in my desk at Telefax. When is the flight?"

"The rocket is scheduled for tomorrow. You will have to buy your ticket through the port-agency which holds the cancellation. I am afraid they will ask for a premium."

Fellbank stated the price, and it was quite high. It represented all of Gideon's savings in the bank under his working-name; apparently Fellbank's espionage-unit was in top form.

"You can earn it back," Fellbank said, "by writing some scripts on Galani surgery. I will give you a letter of introduction to Mel-El-Aben, one of the most famous Martian medics."

It was an unexpected prize. Galani

surgeons kept to themselves, and a world which virtually worshipped their medical skill would be grateful for information on their working methods. Apparently, Dr. Fellbank was quite anxious for Gideon to go to Mars. On a hunch, when the connection broke, Gideon televised Hastings and had him check the fate of the woman whose place he was to take.

"It was an accident, all right," Hastings said when the PD agent reports trickled in; "she was pushed in front of a truck by an unidentified Earthman. The ticket automatically passed on to the next person on the waiting list, but was suddenly withdrawn on instructions from Mars itself."

"Thanks," Gideon said hollowly. *They all seem quite anxious to get me to Mars*, he thought. He advised Ridenour to report, but his superior was already aware of the decision.

"You are to appear immediately for a truth serum-test."

Gideon resented the implication. "Why?"

Ridenour coldly flashed a report on the screen. "This is a transcript of a teleradio report direct from Mel-El-Aben on Mars to Dr. Fellbank:

...as for the eye operation on James Gideon, it will be a simple matter. Expedite affairs so that he comes here as quickly as possible. I knew his father quite well. In time James Gideon will be one of us.

The transcript was whipped away and Ridenour's angry face was on the screen again. "PD agents will pick you up," he said; "if you are a suspect, and manage to survive the truth-serum, I'll take personal pleasure in killing you."

"BUT LISTEN, Nick," Gideon shouted as the screen faded away. PD agents were already at the door when he left the apartment. They stood on each side of him, paralyzers ready, and escorted him to the Side-walk Express. The suddenness of the accusation had stunned him. Not that

Ridenour lacked reason; the ease with which Fellbank secured rocket-passage was suspicious in itself. The meaning of Mel-El-Aben's instructions to Fellbank tugged at his mind, as if some forgotten memory were trying to assert itself.

"I knew his father quite well...." the Galani words said; yet, that was a manifest impossibility—Tom Gideon had never left Earth, and to the best of his knowledge Mel-El-Aben had never left Mars. True, Gideon's father had once worked as a minor official in one of the rocket-ports built as possible bases for hell-bombers. If the Galani had established Suspect-cells on Earth some decades ago, it was conceivably possible that Mel-El-Aben had been smuggled to Earth and had 'converted' Gideon's father—if such conversion were possible.

But most disconcerting was the blunt statement, *"In time, James Gideon will be one of us."*

When they reached the PD sub-station in Ridenour's apartment, Gideon accepted the truth-serum hypo with a mixture of fear and eagerness. If, subconsciously, he had been "converted"—either by hypnotism or electronic thought-control—the serum would uncover the subterfuge.

Drugged, half-aware of the questions that Ridenour hurled at him, Gideon spoke mechanically, and without any effort at evasion. Name? Age? Political beliefs? Your opinion on the Treaty of 2009? Are you a Suspect? Have you disobeyed any PD orders? When? Why? What were the circumstances? In the event of war, what would you do? Why? Why? Why?

•

When he came out of the drug's control the relaxed faces of Ridenour and the two PD agents near him, assured Gideon that all was well.

"No doubts," Ridenour said, suddenly relaxed as if he had undergone a great strain. "No evasions, and no

doubts. You're as sound as McDonough himself."

"But the transcript of Mel-El-Aben's instructions?" Gideon asked.

"Apparently a plant, to cast suspicion upon you. The Galani must know that you are a PD agent and that we have tapped all of Fellbank's wires, screens, and radios. There's a slip up somewhere—perhaps in PD itself. I just checked them myself with this serum," he said, noticing the two agents in the room, "and they've checked me. We're all loyal, praise the skies."



"What about the trip to Mars?"

"Go through with it; maybe you can bluff your way. I'll give you truth-serum equipment to use on Münneheim and our other agents there. The stuff is now foolproof; at last we've hit on an infallible system to uncover Suspects. Unfortunately, they're too strong now and have incensed public opinion against its general use. But that doesn't prevent us from using it ourselves."

Gideon's mind was on the dangerous mission to Mars. If the Galani knew that he was PD, and that their attempt to incriminate him had failed, he could not expect to accomplish much. Worse yet, he would be placing his life in their hands if he underwent the eye-operation. As if sensing his line of thought, Ridenour said, "Use your own judgment regarding the eye operation. You can return to Earth whenever you choose. While you're in Mars, report directly to Chief McDonough. He has all the records, having taken a personal interest in the Galani threat—did I tell you, by the way, that one of his ancestors was tortured to death by Mel-El-Aben himself? Praise the skies, I'll

be on a much-needed vacation in the meantime—unless Project Victory breaks and we blow up the whole damn red planet."



MARS WAS visible in the skies when Gideon arrived on the following night at the Taos launching platforms. When the guards filled out his passport, they automatically wrote in the word "*Therapy*" after the query, *Purpose of visit?*"

Commercial and diplomatic travelers were rare; most affairs could be handled by teleradio. Since the treaty forbids the admission of Galani to Earth, the rockets were usually filled only with the sick and aged who sought the expensive services of Martian physicians and surgeons. The fact that from five to fifteen percent of the rockets failed to get through to Mars—blowing up or disappearing mysteriously in space—did not deter the long-waiting-lines of Earthmen and women whose only hope for life and health lay in the miraculous tentacles of Galani surgeons, who had perfected their techniques after thousands of years of practice. Who would undergo a knife in an old man's clumsy hands when practiced tentacles, each a microscopic mind in itself, could heal painlessly and effectively?

Gideon mingled in the waiting-room with the other 35 hopefuls, all drawn to Mars by the lure of quick and easy surgery. He glanced at the passenger-listing, amazed at the indication that most patients were chosen from the ranks of the rich or famous. Heading the list was Senator Burbank, a violent Galaniphobe, whose speeches in the Senate had long denounced any attempts to alleviate the conditions of the 2009 Treaty. Gideon approached

him on the pretext of an interview for Telefax.

"No one is second to me," Burbank said—his face and words recorded in the Telefax receiver carried in Gideon's pocket—"in my regard for Galani skill. The very fact that I go to seek their aid for an unfortunate kidney-complication, and cardiac troubles which Earth doctors have been unable to correct, is proof of my faith in their genius. But this does not alter my determination that not one sentence of the Treaty of 2009 be changed. Two great cultures cannot exist side-by-side on the same planet; eventually there would be a clash of wills—the opinions of many misguided Earthmen (commonly called Suspects) to the contrary. I am unalterably opposed to any weakening of the barriers between the two worlds."

His words were broken off by the barked orders to take seats on the rocket. The men and women herded into the aisle were the usual assortment of patients bound for Martial hospitals. Here was a young man with blue lips, patently a cardiac case. Seated about him in the padded compartments were nephritis, tuberculars, cancerites, ~~uncertain health~~, and scarred radiation-workers, all seeking aid.

Virtually every one would return to Earth with bodies cleansed of disease. Gratitude alone, the PD Agent decided, could account for the growing number of Suspects.

"Strictly off the record, Senator," Gideon said after the acceleration of the launched Mars-bound rocket had lessened, "what do you think of the Suspects?"

The Senator's face hardened. "Traitors who should be shot. Let me tell you something, young man; they are growing increasingly powerful. A good one-tenth of the Senate is composed of Galani partisans, and before long their demands for Treaty-revision in favor of Mars will be met."

"Any idea what makes them that way?"

The Senator was puzzled. "I just don't know—and it worries me. I used to think it was misguided idealism, of the sort that once favored anti-vivisection legislation. But the Galani make no secret of their intention to destroy the Earth, when and if they get the chance. What motive can the Suspects have to aid the would-be destroyers of their own world? It is beyond understanding; perhaps a fresh mind like yours can solve this baffling riddle."

ON ARRIVAL at Deimosport, Gideon registered at Skyways Hotel. Its ornate entrance bore the words which the Galani deeply resented: "*For Earthmen Only.*" Its lobby was the crossroads for interplanetary routes that stretched from Venus to Jupiter. Import-export officials consular representatives; planet-hopping vacationists, and cure-seekers filled its halls, their merriment ringing everywhere. A peculiar gaiety filled the Hotel. Most of it came by deliriously-happy Earthlings, cured of lingering diseases, awaiting transport home. Underlying it, however, was a deep-seated understanding that all of them were living on a planet which would be blasted to nothing, the moment Earth-Galani relationships were stretched to the breaking point. Project Victory, in which guided hell-bombs were already prepared in launching ports on Earth, was no secret to the men and women in Skyways Hotel.

PD Agent Munnheim, a commercial code-clerk at the Import-Export Bank, contacted Gideon in the Andromeda Lounge, where sensory-image perfume filled the air, evoking subtle sensations of the artificial Venusian luxury-world. They sat in a corner of the bar where opaque light-walls shielded them from observation. They exchanged credentials and a superficial truth-serum injection, whose effect lasted long enough to check PD loyalty.

"For the world's sake," the ruddy Munnheim said, "get McDonough to send a few shiploads of the serum. The planet is loaded with Suspects. They've

infiltrated into every agency and office in Deimosport. I can't trust my own Agents here. Some of my closest friends have been holding secret meetings with Galani warriors. About one fifth of the PD agents here are known Suspects, and Galani sympathizers. How many of the other four-fifths are loyal to Earth, I don't know—at times I am afraid of finding out."

Gideon asked the question which still baffled them all. "What makes traitors out of them?"

"Drugs," Munnheim said flatly; "every known Suspect has, at one time or another, been in close, personal contact with a Galani physician. Something is done to them which changes their conception of right and wrong, wipes out a lifetime of loyalty to Earth, and replaces that loyalty with devotion to the Galani and their ambition to destroy our world."

Gideon shook his head. "We've repeatedly examined Suspects. There's no trace of any drug in their blood, bodies, or air."

"But there *is* a difference," Munnheim broke in, quickly; "the blood of Suspects has an abnormally-high percentage of oxygen. I've studied the reports. It's true also in the case of Dr. Fellbank, which you followed."

"It has no significance that our doctors can find."

Gideon recalled medical experiments on Earth, in which PD physicians tried to duplicate the blood-content of Suspects in an effort to discover the significance of the oxygen-rate; there was none.

"But it *must* be in medical treatment," Munnheim said, pressing his point—"else why have the Galani refused to permit Earthmen to watch their surgical operations?"

"They *have* permitted it. Hundreds of Earth-doctors have watched and studied such operations."

"Non-Suspect doctors?"

GIDEON stopped suddenly, as if trying to draw up some underlying thought in his subconscious. Munn-

heim's suspicions were correct. Dr. Fellbank had witnessed many operations—but he was a Suspect. If Suspects were produced medically, then obviously only Suspect-doctors would be permitted to become familiar enough with Galani techniques to understand the process. It followed, then, that the whole membership of the medical profession which ever studied on Mars, was Suspect. It explained, also, why the Galani never permitted Telefax camera-recording of major operations. Permission was freely granted for a few decades, following the Treaty of 2009—and then gradually withdrawn until it could not be secured at all.

"It's in their surgery!" Gideon said, elated at the discovery of a lead which might explain the strange hold the Galani held over its Suspects. "If we can secure a camera-recording of an operation performed on a non-Suspect we might get the secret. The record, studied by loyal PD physicians, might indicate the means."

"There'll be some stink," Munnheim said, captured by Gideon's enthusiasm, "but it's worth the risk. Maybe they install some sort of thought-control radio which defies our jammers. If so, a photographic-record of the operation might indicate how it's done. There's still enough serum to test a few of the PDs here. If they're loyal, I'll arrange to plant ourselves with a camera in one of the operating-rooms; we'll get the evidence!"

The evidence, Gideon thought ruefully, will provoke war if it is found that the Galani are forcing Earthmen and women to turn traitor against their will.

In that case, he would feel no compunctions in urging Project Victory. The Martian Galani would be destroyed, but the future of the human race would be saved. To his own surprise he felt a wave of secret admiration at the skill and persistence of the tree-like Galani, waging their hopeless cold war against the Earth. They knew they would be destroyed the moment Earth discovered what was

being done; but still they fought back by secret infiltration into Earthling's loyalty. If there actually was such a secret invasion, made possible by Galani medical skills, Mars would be annihilated.

It was several days before Munnheim was able to arrange for the secret observation of a case of Galani surgery. Blueprints of the Galani hospital, open only to patients and sympathetic Earth-physicians, who had passed a screening board, had to be secured. Tapping of teleradios, wires, and management-offices produced the schedule of operations; the names of the patients and doctors; and the rooms in which the operations would be held.



Gideon ran his finger down the list. "There's our man," he said suddenly. "Senator Burbank is due for heart and kidney surgery. He's been on record for many years as being steadfastly opposed to any revision of the Treaty of 2009. If he turns Suspect, the Galani will have won a powerful ally; millions of people would say that if Burbank is in favor of admitting Galani to Earth, then it must be all right."

"You figure the surgeons will try to make a Suspect out of him?"

"There couldn't be a better ally for them. The operating surgeon is listed as Mel-El-Aben; he's Dr. Fellbank's immediate superior in the Suspect espionage-group."

Gideon remembered the transcript of Mel-El-Aben's instructions to Dr. Fellbank. "I knew his father quite well. In time James Gideon will be one

of us." Of course, it was a counter-move to discredit him in the eyes of the PD—but a doubt still lingered in his mind. What if the words had more meaning than he thought? Coldness swept up within him and clammy fingers encircled his heart; a pain began to beat in his head. He shook the feeling away. Of course they would try to make a Suspect out of him—but he knew that he would never undergo any Galani surgery. Thick eyeglasses or not, he preferred freedom with myopic eyes, than good sight as a Galani suspect-slave.

The momentary feeling of panic eased away, as he and Munnheim made their final plans to secretly observe Galani surgery in action.



ON THE NIGHT before Burbank's scheduled operation, Gideon and Munnheim entered the hospital through the fuel-chambers. For several hours they waited, cramped in a packing-case, until the guard-schedule permitted them to reach the third floor without observation. The individual rooms were filled with Earthling patients, but the main-offices, and all the help were staffed by Martian Galani. Their giant tree-like figures rolled eerily down the hospital-hallways, casting quivering shadows.

Once in the operating-room, they set up camera and rope-guards in the shaftways used for the disposal of laundry. It was an uncomfortable position, hanging on a rope with loaded-camera perched precariously on shoulders. "It'll be safe enough," Munnheim said, "unless one of the Galani decides to look down this shaft."

The circular doorway of the laundry shaft swung open slightly, so the camera lens could emerge. Gideon

could see nothing but the hall doorway opposite them, and a crescent of space that would be occupied by the surgeon and patient.

At noon, the red doors swung open and Mel-El-Aben, Galani Surgeon, First Grade, rolled in.

Gideon had seen many Martians, but each sight was virtually a new shock. Aben was monstrously tall and heavy. The main trunk of his body, some eight feet high, resembled a blasted, ivy-colored, deformed oak-tree. Green tentacles emerging from two main branches, hung over him like blossoming foliage.

Millions of years in a constantly-changing environment had produced this complicated species, which embodied features of both plant and animal life. In the struggle for survival on a hostile world, the life-expectancy of the individual Galani had been tremendously increased—but at a frightful cost. Though the life-span had reached as high as 700 years, the Galani had their Achilles-heel in the declining birthrate. Simple creatures reproduced without difficulty, but the incredible complexity of the Galani structure made the newborn death-rate a source of terror.

For several hundred thousand years, the Galani had known they were a doomed race; their entire science had been concentrated upon medicine, biology, surgery, and the other physical fields of knowledge in an effort to find an answer. In addition, racial memory, whereby each individual Galani held the instincts, thoughts, and aspirations of his ancestors, made the future fate of the species a highly personal tragedy to each Martian Galani.

The operating-chamber, red throughout as if to complement the green tentacles, had no furniture but a concave, diagonal chair upon which the pillar-like form of Mel-El-Aben leaned. The patient, Senator Burbank, was wheeled in on a pink stretcher by another Galani and set before Aben. The second

Galani left and Mel-El-Aben remained alone with the quietly-breathing, but unconscious, Senator Burbank.

Gideon shifted the camera lens so it would be directed at the Senator's chest. "Hypnotic suggestion," Munnheim whispered. "All anesthesia is strictly local. I understand that the Galani manufactures it himself in his own brown-blood vessels."

ABEN'S TWO tentacles rested upon the bare chest. The green branching appendages divided into two, then, four, eight, and sixteen parts, dividing again and again until a gossamer filament seemed to envelope the Senator. Each of the microscopic needles was like a living, intelligent pin-point knife, able to push through tissue, curving and wending through bone and muscle. In a few minutes the Senator's chest was infiltrated with several hundred spidery threads, each one under the absolute precision-control of Mel-El-Aben's brain. They severed nerve, anesthetized, seared, and healed with such infinite care that virtually no-one died of internal hemorrhage.

Gideon's camera ground away silently, taking pictures of the operation that would be studied with minute care by PD. The outer technique was obvious, but nothing could record what those miracle-working tentacles were doing under the skin. The Galani produced drugs from his own body and there was no way in which the camera could record the process. Within an hour surgical treatment of the heart was over; the Senator was then rolled over on his back, a portion of the tentacles removed and then placed over the small of his back. This was the kidney-operation. As yet, Mel-El-Aben had made no move in which a thought-control device could conceivably be planted in the Senator's body. When Aben's tentacles were lifted from the body there were no marks but a slight bluish discoloration; the quiet, measured breathing of the Senator continued.

"He hasn't done a thing which would affect the Senator's will-power or character," Gideon whispered to Munnheim as he twisted about for a better hold on the rope. "Maybe we made a mistake in thinking that hypnotism has been ruled out; there seems to be no answer, surgically."

The door of the operating-room opened again, but instead of one Galani who should come to remove the patient, several green-enshrouded Martians entered. They filled the room quickly; their bodies, pressed upon the laundry-chute door, slamming it shut. Munnheim cursed softly, but Gideon shushed him for the muffled sounds of the Galani could be heard.

"O mighty Mel-El-Aben," a husky, grating voice, made by the rasping of two tentacles rubbing against each other, cut through the air in Martial Galani syllables. Munnheim, his mouth held toward Gideon's ear, quickly translated, "Surgeon without equal, and devoted patriot, is this worthless carrion alive?"

"The Senator from the putrid third planet," Mel-El-Aben's voice answered, "is well; his body is healthy, and no damage has been done."

"General Scho-La-Nui, now serving our species on Earth, reports that this Burbank holds a strategic post in the Senate; we have need of Earthmen in his position."

"It shall be done, my friends. Let the operation proceed."

The Galani were now silent, nor could their actions be seen by the two Earthmen hiding in the chute. Gideon waited impatiently, hoping that one of the brown bodies with green tentacles would move so that he could photograph the operation. When at last they did leave, several hours later, nothing could be seen but a hasty shifting to the doors as the Galani rolled away from the scene of the operation. Burbank's body was gone. At night Gideon and Munnheim crawled out of the storage-room and escaped safely to town, angry at their failure to dis-

cover the means by which Earthmen became Suspects.

That such means existed was now beyond doubt.

ON THE following day Gideon scanned the current issue of the facsimile *Deimosport News* on his desk. Munnheim ruefully pointed to a lead article.

Scho-La-Nui, noted War Veteran killed in rocket crash. Nineteen Galani, including General Scho-La-Nui, whose military exploits during the late war earned him immortality in the hearts of the Galani, were killed in a rocket-crash in Revenge Desert yesterday noon. All bodies were burned beyond recognition. Intimations that Planetary Defense agents—Earth's terroristic organization—were responsible for the crash, have been stoutly denied by Earth-authorities. Several motors were tampered with, investigators declare...

Gideon angrily crumpled the facsimile and flung it away. "A set of deliberate lies," he said, "to stir up hatred against Earth. What was it the Galani said in the operating room? 'General Scho-La-Nui, now serving on Earth.' Evidently the crash was deliberately caused by the Galani to throw off suspicion regarding Scho-La-Nui's activities and location. If we think he's dead, the PD won't search for him on Earth."

Munnheim read the passenger-listing. "Nineteen dead," he said, "and fifteen of them were war veterans formerly involved in information-work—or espionage, as we call it."

"They've all been smuggled to Earth," Gideon said, "and a mass of dead Galani bodies put on the rocket and destroyed. Try to get our own PD agents there—though I'm certain not a single body will be identified."

The telescreen glimmered on the table and Gideon turned on the switch. The face of an attache in Earth's consulate office swirled on the screen. Munnheim backed away to be out of the field of vision.

"The Galani Government," the attache announced, "has formally asked

us to recall all PD agents on Mars, on the grounds that their activities constitute a menace to Earth-Mars relationships."

"My name is on the list, of course," Gideon said.

The attache, a loyal PD, shook his head. "No. Funny thing is that the whole Earth-colony here knows you are PD. It's impossible that the Galani are unaware of the fact, yet you are not listed. Do you want a copy of the diplomatic letter?"



"Put the name-list on the screen."

Munnheim, having recognized the voice of the speaker, leaned forward with Gideon to study the listing of PD agents requested to leave Mars. All of them were loyal, and none had ever undergone treatment in Galani hospitals. PD agents, the Galani charge read, acted as brutal conquerors in an occupied country. Their continued presence could be regarded as an unfriendly act, contrary to the spirit of the Treaty of 2009.

"The diplomatic maneuver," Gideon said, when the attache's copy of the request cleared from the screen, "will force a showdown in the Senate. Apparently they have become quite confident that enough Suspects in the Senate will vote in their favor. I think I'd better go back to Earth before the big blow-up—but first I'll have a word with Senator Burbank."

THE INTERVIEW was easily arranged, on visitors' day in the hospital. One of the Galani led him to the bedside where the pale Senator greeted him.

"Just feeling tired," he said, "but apart from that I'm perfectly fine. These Galani doctors can perform miracles."

"I'm glad to hear that, Senator; when will you return to Earth?"

"As soon as they permit me—which will be in a week or so, I imagine. I am anxious to get back to the Senate in view of the critical Earth-Mars diplomatic relations."

"Are you referring, Senator, to the Galani request that PD agents be recalled to Earth?"

"Yes. The record of Planetary Defense is a foul one. Our agents, instead, of representing the best that Earth can offer, have been recruited from criminals, perverts, and other debased character groups. They have amassed great wealth for themselves by abusing their positions of trust. Through them we have insulted and abused a great people, the Galani. Young man," he said, pointing a finger at Gideon, "when you return to Earth you may quote every word I say to Telefax; and what is more, I will give you an unquestionable scoop."

He leaned back with a satisfied smile on his face. Gideon felt cold, remembering some ancient proverb that said if you must tell lies, tell gigantic ones. Gideon knew the work of the PD, having read the Martian agents' reports. The Senator's outburst was sheer fabrication.

"What is this scoop, Senator?"

"Having met the Galani, and having studied conditions here first-hand, I have reconsidered my stand on the Treaty of 2009. I am in favor of immediate revision, and I hope that all my many friends in the Senate will vote with me for the abrogation of all limits upon trade and immigration between our two great planets."

Gideon thanked him and after a few more words, walked away with a pain that clutched at his mind.

Senator Burbank was now a traitor-Suspect.

A Galani nurse, evidently a female—the trunk was shorter, and the tentacles brighter in color—met him in the corridor. "Please enter this doorway," she said, her tentacles slurring the unfamiliar English words, "o

mighty, noble news-correspondent of Telefax, this doorway please."

He entered a small, bare room—empty but for the massive figure of a brown-and-green Galani who stood in its center.

He whirled the sound-producing tentacles. "I am Mel-El-Aben."

"It is an honor," Gideon answered, "to meet the surgeon, whose skill is renowned throughout the solar system. This poor, unimportant..."

"Dispense with the formalities," Mel-El-Aben's voice said sharply; "between us, there need be no hypocrisy."

THE GALANI'S tentacles, twitched as if with great emotion. It was said that their feelings could be read in the changing tints of their tentacles, but Gideon found no clue to the meaning of this strange meeting. It was best to be silent.

"You have delayed submitting to surgery. Why?"

"I have reconsidered," Gideon said; "wearing thick lens glasses is not such a handicap."

"You do not trust us. You think perhaps that we will kill you on the operating table, because we know you are a highly-placed agent in Planetary Defense's espionage-corps."

"The surgeon is mistaken."

"Mel-El-Aben makes no mistake. In any event, the operation will not be performed. In its place we have other treatment planned. It may interest you to know that all reports sent to McDonough in Washington have been intercepted by us. In their place we have sent your conclusions that the Suspect-organization on Earth will be abandoned the moment the Senate votes for treaty revision. We have also included your considered opinion that peace with the Galani is not only possible, but quite essential, and that self-seeking PD agents in the past have sent false reports. Since we know what your actual opinions are at the moment, you realize that we cannot permit you or Munnheim to return to Earth."

Gideon turned abruptly and ran to the door, intent on escape. A jab of pain shot through his shoulder, twisting him about so that he could see the raised Galani tentacle plunged like a needle in him. He grasped the wiry branch and pulled. His whole body was wrenched from within.

"Fool," Mel-El-Aben said, "I can kill you by producing poison at the tip, but a strong sedative will serve the purpose as well."

Gideon lunged, kicking at the brown mass, hoping to free himself. Mel-El-Aben reeled back, but the tentacle held. A numbness grew in Gideon's back; with his fists, he hammered at Mel-El-Aben's body and felt a weakness grow in his arms. The world blackened but before unconsciousness swept over him he dimly heard the door burst open and the loud report of paralyzer-guns rip through the suffocating air.



HE AWOKE to see Munnheim's anxious face hovering over him. There was the jab of a hypo-needle, and his mind suddenly cleared. They were in a copse of reddish trees; in the distance could be seen the vague outlines of the hospital.

"I followed you," Munnheim said, "and entered the hospital on the pretext of visiting another patient. When I saw you enter the small room, I simply listened at the door."

Gideon shook his head, clearing away the last traces of Aben's drug. "They've framed the whole PD," he said, "made us appear like devils, faked our reports to Washington, and misled headquarters as to the true state of affairs here."

"I should have killed him instead of using a paralyzer," Munnheim said,

helping Gideon to his wobbly feet. "No one saw me drag you out, but when Mel-El-Aben comes to within the hour there will be a dragnet put out for you."

They crawled through the bushes, away from the hospital and in the general direction of the Hotel and the launching-port. They hid behind some abandoned rest-cottages as a busload of Earth patients rode out from the hospital to the Earth-bound rocket. They watched the red dust settle and then walked on the road.

"Passports for the patients," Gideon said, "have all been cleared. If I could substitute for one of them..."

"...and ride back to Earth today?" Munnheim concluded. "Good, if it can be done; but they're all Suspects by now, and each identity is known. Better try the stowaway trick."

The rocket for Earth gleamed in the faint evening light, the long row of passengers lining up to present their passports at the main gate. In the rear of the rocket, husky Galani lifted the baggage racks with steel-like tentacles, and shoved them through, between the jets.

"Baggage room," Gideon whispered. "There's only one Galani on duty; keep him busy for ten minutes while I crawl into one of the crates."

"You'll never pull through the acceleration."

"The chance has to be taken. I'll be arrested by customs on Earth, but I'll manage to get in touch with Ridenour. Get going, Munnheim, and wish me luck!"

They shook hands quickly, and Munnheim walked to the front of the baggage office. When the Galani's body was turned, Gideon stepped into the back and hurriedly walked to the rear door, where a truckload of rocket-bound crates and luggage was assembled.

"I beg your pardon," he could hear Munnheim's voice saying, "but I left some bags here yesterday and lost my ticket."

The crates were locked, but Gideon

swiftly opened one, with the aid of a crowbar, and hurriedly flung out the assortment of clothing and personal effects. He kicked the material away and then climbed into the crate, pulling down the top over his head and holding it in place with the crowbar. The rumble of a hand-truck was heard and a few minutes later he felt the crate joggle as if clutched in the tentacles of a Galani. He felt himself raised and flung across another crate. The crash ripped the top out of his hands and sent him flying against the wall. It was dark inside the storage section of the rocket. He heard the faint roar of the motors and a Galani call out, "All set with baggage! Lock doors!"

The lone door closed, and the rocket shook as it gained power for the long voyage back to Earth. A sudden blast told him the rocket had set off; a few minutes later, blood came rushing through his nose and mouth and darkness set its claws upon him.

HE AWOKE some hours later, weakened by loss of blood and the shock of acceleration. No bones were broken and his eyeglasses were miraculously intact. A sharp headache persisted but this too seemed to be passing.

He hammered upon the bulkhead door until a surprised steward opened it. Gideon surrendered himself, knowing that passenger-rockets did not dare turn back in midspace and that, come what may, they would get to Earth. He knew that the patients were all Suspect, but the pilots may still be loyal; their presence would save him from instant execution. It would be an easy thing to say that he had been killed during unprotected acceleration.

"Name and rank?" the Second Mate asked when he had been led to the control rooms.

"James Gideon, Agent, Planetary Defense, Intelligence Corps. Here are my papers."

The Second Mate glanced over them

hurriedly. "For all I know, you're a Galani spy like the rest of the traitors among the passengers. The PD will find that out soon enough; consider yourself under arrest. Customs officers and PD will be teleradioed, and informed of your presence on the vessel. They'll meet you when we land. In the meantime get the hell in the back, among the rest of the passengers."

Gideon sighed. For the time being, all was well; he leaned back in a passenger seat, pressing his hands upon his pain-wracked forehead. He hoped he would reach Earth in time to save Munnheim, and the rest of the loyal PDs on Mars. Only evacuation would save them, now; the Galani had become brutally direct in their hidden war with Earth. They possessed some secret which made them supremely confident of victory; the hate-campaign in their facsimile papers was reaching a new height of arrogance. On top of strained diplomatic relations was the knowledge that traitor-Suspects had become increasingly powerful on Earth. If every man who had ever visited Mars for medical treatment was a traitor, then Earth's position was precarious indeed.



Earth still held the upper hand, Gideon knew, and this thought gave him hope. Project Victory—in which atomic warfare could be unleashed in one minute from a building near Washington, and thus destroy Mars in one sweep—was ready if needed. The threat to use this secret weapon would stop the Galani once and for all. The thought of the planet Mars, blasted and ruined forever, made him uneasy. But if Gideon had to choose between the survival of the human race or the Galani, would there be any doubt where his loyalties belonged?

When the rocket landed on Earth he was promptly arrested, placed in a cell, and held incommunicado. His identification papers was taken by the local PD officer, but this was to be expected; the prints, descriptions and signatures would automatically be checked with the main files in Washington.

For three days he lay in his cell, watched by the overhead observation lens, without seeing or hearing any man. His food trays, without knives or forks, came sliding through slots that opened and closed mechanically. The dishes were of paper; he had no razor or glass, and his face began to grow haggard.

ON THE FOURTH day he was brought forth before the PD tribunal, a weakened, exhausted figure.

"I demand to know on what charge I am being held," Gideon said, "and that my PD superiors Nick Ridenour, and Chief McDonough, be informed of my arrest."

The presiding officer leaned forward across the judge's stand. As he did so his hair fell over his eyes and he pushed back the toupee angrily. Gideon wondered for a moment why one so young was bald and needed a wig.

"The charge," the judge said, "is murder. You are accused of strangling Planetary Defense Agent Munnhheim. Three witnesses saw you commit the murder and attempt to escape through the baggage-room of the Earth rocket. In addition you have been charged with treason, with the attempt to kill Mel-El-Aben, one of the greatest, noblest surgeons the mighty race of Galani had ever produced."

"You—you are a Suspect!" Gideon blurted suddenly. He looked wildly about him, but saw only suspicion and hatred in the eyes of the judges and guards. "I demand the truth-serum," he shouted, feeling walls close in upon him. If a PD court was Suspect what hope could there be? "I demand

that my case be brought before the attention of Nick Ridenour and Chief McDonough, or the President."

The judge rapped his gavel. "Both Agent Ridenour and Chief McDonough are occupied with other duties. A transcript of the testimony given by the witnesses on Mars has already reached us. In view of the delicate interplanetary situation Chief McDonough has authorized each Court to deal out immediate justice in cases of treason. Such a case is now before me.

"On the basis of the evidence before me, and by virtue of the authority invested in me by Planetary Defense, I sentence the accused, James Gideon, to death in the gas chambers at Alamagordo. The execution is to take place tomorrow at noon; court dismissed."

GIDEON spent an uneasy night in his cell. There was no doubt that the PD court was ruled by Suspects; evidently they were quick to pass sentence before it could be over-ruled by Ridenour or McDonough. He had no way of knowing what was happening in the outside world. If the Senate was infiltrated with Suspects, treaty-revision would be voted; and in a few short days, the Galani would overrun the Earth and rule it through the Suspect organization. His mission to Mars had been a failure, for, despite proof of Galani determination to wage the cold war he had no knowledge of the means used to convert loyal Earthmen into traitor-Suspects. Such means did exist and he was convinced that the answer lay in surgery. But how? Why?

A guard hammered on the iron door and then walked into the small cell. It was early afternoon and the execution was set for evening. The guard carried a pressed suit of clothes and toilet implements under his arm.

"You can shave and wash up," he said; "I'll be back in a half hour."

"Thanks," Gideon replied, grimly. At least they would permit him to die decently. The suit was surprisingly a

good fit and his own was stained and tattered. He washed and shaved slowly. He felt no fear but his heart pounded; his face flushed, and the dull ache which troubled him since the rocket flight throbbed again in his head. When he was finished, the guard came and escorted him out of the prison to a waiting PD truck. They walked past armed guards, all of them hostile, hatred and contempt in their eyes whenever Gideon stepped near.

In the truck he was manacled to the wall. There were no windows within and he could not guess the general direction in which they rode. The guard beside him sat silently.

An hour later the truck stopped and its rear door opened. This was not Alamogordo, he knew. "Am I to be shot while 'attempting escape'?" he asked bitterly. Apparently they did not dare execute him officially, so illegal means would be chosen. When the truck rode by, leaving them in the field, he recognized the desert-surroundings of the Taos Airport. A black jet, unnumbered and with no identification, stood in the center of the field.

"The sentence has been suspended," the guard said when he led Gideon to the plane. His voice was almost respectful. "The judge almost made a mistake, but everything will be settled now."

"Am I being released?" Gideon demanded; "where will you take me?"

"The court decided that you were ill on Mars, and not responsible for your actions; it has committed you to the care of Dr. S. T. Fellbank."

Feeling the prod of the paralyzer, Gideon stepped into the jet.

HIS APPARENT docility convinced the guard, for when he entered the jet, Gideon was ready for him. He jammed his knee into the guard's belly, then brought his fist against the man's mouth. The guard crumpled and fell upon his face. Gideon leaned down, picked the paralyzer from the holster and turned

to face the pilot's seat. There was no one there, but the jet soon roared and set off, acceleration flinging him against the wall. "Pre-set automatic," he muttered when he made his way to the control board and tried to take over the flight.

The instruments would not respond, and he knew that any effort to tamper with them would warn the control agent in Taos. Jets from other ports would launch and intercept him, no matter what route he took. He had no choice but to stay where he was until the jet reached its destination.

Gideon turned to the unconscious guard and rummaged through his pockets. Aside from PD identity cards with the name and descriptions of Agent Barrows, there was nothing that would indicate where the jet was going or who would meet them at the destination. Barrows was about his general build and appearance. Gideon stripped him of his clothes, and dressed in them. He slapped the guard's face until he was conscious, and then forced him to dress in Gideon's clothes.

"Where is the rocket going?" he demanded.

"New York," Barrows answered, apparently easily resigned to their changed roles.

"Will anyone meet you there?"

The guard seemed to consider this and then shook his head.

Gideon slapped his face. "Don't lie!" he said; "if there's anyone waiting for us I will kill you and say that you attempted to overcome me."

"No one is there," Barrows replied, wearily, "I was to take you to Dr. Fellbank's office."

"For surgery?"

The guard looked up sharply. Their eyes met and Gideon felt as if the man were probing into his soul. Gideon turned his eyes away.

"Don't look at me," he warned, "or I will kill you. Remember that I have nothing to lose. Why does Dr. Fellbank want me?"

"To keep you under observation. You have been ill; you were hurt in the rocket and now you feel fevered. Thoughts are running through your mind; your head aches, and the blood seems to pound and pound and pound..."

"Stop!" The guard's voice was hypnotic in its effect. Gideon slapped him again. He dared not look at the man's eyes or listen to him. Was he actually ill? Did he really kill Munnheim on Mars, and was it his imagination that the Galani were a monstrous race who hated the Earth? Ideas swirled through his mind and he tried to shake them away.

"You are a Suspect?"

"Yes."

"You know that the Galani want to destroy the human race. Why do you betray your native planet and aid an alien species of vicious tree-like friends?"

Barrows' eyes flashed angrily. "The Galani were a civilized race when homo sapiens lived like vermin in dark caves; they explored the stars when humanity was still fettered with superstition and ignorance."

"That may be true," Gideon said, speaking earnestly as if to convince the guard—even though it was his own doubting heart that needed the words, "but is it not better to serve your own species than a set of monsters who will wipe out your kind, and everything that your children and children's children may yet be able to achieve? You are human like myself; you have arms, legs, a heart, and mind like I have, and not a brown-bark, green tentacles and a foul putrescent body. Why betray your own people and serve the Galani?"

The guard shook his head in exasperation. "Dr. Fellbank will explain it to you."

"No! He will explain nothing! The Galani have discovered some way whereby the human will can be destroyed and made subservient to an alien race. He wants to treat or operate on me so that I, too, shall become

a traitor-Suspect. No, my fine Galani-lover; neither Fellbank or Mel-El-Aben will make me act like anything but an Earthman. I am human. I was born so, and I will die so."

Barrows said nothing but stared ahead into the darkness.



AS BARROWS said, there was no one to meet them at the port when the jet landed. "This must be," Gideon said, as he brought down the butt of his paralyzer upon the guard's head. The man fell, and Gideon tied his body with sheets torn apart from his clothing. Stepping out alone on the field, Gideon walked calmly away.

From a small pay-booth he televised Ridenour's apartment and told him of his whereabouts.

"Evidently the Martians think I am important enough to be worth framing. Was Munnheim really killed?"

"As dead as they make them; it doesn't look too good for you. Where are you now?"

"At the Airport Rest Room. There's probably a dragnet out for me—or there will be as soon as they find the guard's body. Can you send me a group of trusted PD's so I can get to your apartment without being picked up by some Suspects?"

"Sure. Stay there; I'll have some of the boys on the way. Learn anything on Mars?"

"Not much, but I think if we take a few Suspects by force, and even disect them if necessary, we might find out how it's done. See you later."

He switched off and then walked out into the waiting-room. The excitement of the escape must have damaged his better judgment; it was a mistake, he realized suddenly, to

make a direct call to Ridenour's apartment. Since the Suspect organization was so extensive, they would undoubtedly tap all PD wires; they might even reach him before Ridenour's men could. How could he tell, anyway, whether the PD who approached him were loyal or Suspect? It was a foolish, dangerous move; he would have been wiser to go to Ridenour's apartment directly, and he could still do it.

He left the waiting room, stripping off the PD chevrons on the guard's suit, and took the bus to the city. The apartment was not being guarded; he walked into the hallway and headed for the elevator.

RIDENOUR was alone in his room. "About time," he said, looking up. "We couldn't locate you at the Port."

"Couldn't help it," Gideon said. "The wires might have been tapped by Suspects and I thought it safer to come here straight. Where can I get in touch with McDonough? My reports to him were intercepted and forged by the Galani; they are probably loaded with misinformation regarding Galani plans. There's no doubt about it, this time, Ridenour; the Galani are out to destroy us."

Ridenour looked thoughtful. "The new menace from Mars, eh?" he said. "Are the monsters all set to take over the Earth?" He pulled open a desk drawer and rummaged through some papers.

"Yes, at any moment," Gideon said. "They've succeeded in some sure-fire way of making Earthmen think and act like Galani; even Senator Burbank, who knew the menace for what it was, has become a Suspect. There may be millions of them on Earth!"

Ridenour kept his hand in the desk drawer. "You see them everywhere? These Suspects who are plotting to destroy the Earth?"

"Yes. They're in the Senate and they have infiltrated the PD. Munnheim was killed by a Suspect, if not by the Galani; the judge who sentenced me in Taos is a Suspect, and

so is the guard who brought me to New York. The danger is great! I don't know what their immediate plans are, but their ultimate goal is to make Earth subservient to the Galani."

"I see," Ridenour said, "and when is this great calamity to take place? Tonight?"

"Perhaps not tonight, but..." Gideon stopped suddenly; and a sickening, fearful sensation swept through him as if his whole body had been stabbed with a thousand pain-inflicting knives. "You—you, Ridenour, don't believe me! You, too, are a Suspect!"

"I see," Ridenour said, "so I, too, have become part of this great conspiracy to destroy the Earth. It is very interesting, Gideon..."

Gideon stepped forward blindly, unable to grasp the full meaning of the disastrous feeling which gripped him.

"Stay where you are," Ridenour said, pulling out a paralyzer from the desk drawer; "make no move toward me, or I will shoot."



"You—you a Suspect! I should have known! I should have demanded a truth-serum test immediately, instead of walking into this trap!"

"No trap," Ridenour said, his firm hand not moving as he held the paralyzer, "but for your own good." He raised his voice, "Will you come in now, Doctor?"

The curtains leading to Ridenour's apartment rooms were pulled apart. Gideon turned his head to look into the smiling face of Dr. S. T. Fellbank.

"Good evening, gentlemen," he said; "I was most interested in our friend Gideon's comments on these Suspects."

Gideon was silent. With Ridenour a Suspect, there was virtually no hope. Ridenour was one of a small handful of men who knew the location of Project Victory control-room. If men like him had been turned into Suspects, there was no hope for Earth but the complete atomic destruction of Mars. The Galani needed no war-industry to conquer the Earth; their secret invasion was made by twisting the minds and loyalties of Earthmen. Against such an attack there was no defense but the total annihilation of the planet which controlled and produced such traitor-Suspects. This was the beginning of interplanetary war which would continue until one race or the other would be destroyed forever.

"Do not pretend," Gideon said, "for I know that both of you are Suspects."

Ridenour turned slightly to Dr. Fellbank, but he still held the gun firmly. "Your opinion, Doctor?"

"Schizophrenia, obviously. Delusions of persecution, probably accompanied by violent headaches. Do you feel any pain at the base of your skull? Any spots before your eyes?"

Involuntarily Gideon reached for his glasses and ran his fingers quickly across his forehead. "No," he said, lying. "No pain, whatever; none at all! Stop trying to pretend that I am ill!"

THE SMILE dropped from Fellbank's face. "Let us drop the pretense," he said to Ridenour; "I don't think it would be possible to persuade him to surrender to treatment peacefully. Apparently, James Gideon, you saw and understood quite a bit of what is happening on Mars and Earth."

Gideon did not affirm or deny. The truth was that he did not understand; but he hoped that Dr. Fellbank could be tricked into revealing the facts.

"Unfortunately your father did not prepare you for the truth," Dr. Fellbank went on; "if he had, you would realize what we are trying to do."

"My father was not a Suspect!"

"He should at least have given you a thorough grounding in Galani history and psychology. If you knew as much as we do, you would not be opposing us; you would be serving us."

"I am not a traitor to my people and my world," Gideon said coldly.

"If there were time," Dr. Fellbank said, "I would force you to grow up overnight, and understand things which are now obviously above your level of comprehension. Mel-El-Aben, however, has specifically warned me against tampering with your opinions. That is why we shall do nothing to you but put you in confinement until you realize, and accept, what we are trying to do."

"I will not change," Gideon said; "you will try to convince me that the Galani are superior to homo sapiens, and that we must choose the stronger and destroy the weaker. I reject that basic premise! I am an Earthman, first, last, and always; my destiny is with Earth. It is for my race and my people that I fight, regardless who is superior or weaker."

"Take him," Dr. Fellbank said to Ridenour.

Ridenour stood up. "Do you have any weapons?"

"Yes. In my back pocket."

"Don't reach for it." Paralyzer in hand, Ridenour slowly encircled Gideon, while Dr. Fellbank looked on idly; his free hand reached into the back pocket. With a precision made possible only by years of constant practice in PD gymnasiums, Gideon grasped Ridenour's gun-hand and jerked the trigger finger. The blast rocked the walls of the room. Continuing the same motion, Gideon brought Ridenour's arm over his shoulders and bent forward so that Ridenour's body flew in a flying mare, striking Dr. Fellbank. Both fell backward. Ridenour rolling away and Fellbank drawing the blaster held in his jacket. Gideon drew his own paralyzer and fired twice at the Doctor. Fellbank gasped; a streak of blood ran from mouth and

nose and he fell backward, gun hanging loosely in his hand. The third shot of the paralyzer lashed at Ridenour whose face paled; his body leaned weakly against the desk and then collapsed upon the floor.

Gideon stepped closer to the bodies and leaned down to feel the pulses. Dr. Fellbank was dead, killed by the additional paralyzer-shot. Ridenour was still alive, though considerably stunned. When he fell against the desk, a toupee slid from his scarred skull.

HOLDING Ridenour under the armpits, Gideon dragged him to the next room and placed him upon the bed. In one of the desks he found the truth-serum narcotic kit and hurriedly prepared the solution. The shots had probably been heard and if Ridenour and Fellbank were both in the same apartment, it was evident that it would be used as a Suspect base. He had to work quickly before other members of the Suspect unit came to report to Ridenour.

He plunged the hypo needle into Ridenour's flesh, and waited for the drug to take effect. He had never known Ridenour to wear a toupee, and glanced curiously at the man's head. He was not bald, for new, strong hair was evident. Around the circumference of the skull was a series of fresh scars, barely covered by the toupee.

"Can you hear me?" he asked when he felt Ridenour's body trembling upon the bed. His heart beat strongly and it was clear that Ridenour would live through the combined shocks of paralyzer and truth-serum.

Ridenour's lips moved clumsily. "Yes. I can hear you."

Gideon paused before asking the next fearful question.

"Are you a Suspect?"

"Yes."

"When did you become one?"

"Three weeks ago."

"How?"

"Surgery."

"Who performed the surgery?"

"Mel-El-Aben."

"You were on Mars?" Gideon asked, surprised.

"Yes. I was ordered to report to Earth for duty three months ago. The operation was performed by Mel-El-Aben four weeks ago."

Ridenour's answers confused Gideon; his identity was not clear. Apparently Ridenour considered himself a Galani. Who was he in reality? Were Ridenour's answers given by Ridenour's brain or by some telepathic Galani on Mars?

"What is your name?"



"General Scho-La-Nui, Ninth Division, Mars."

"Where is Nick Ridenour?" he asked softly.

"Dead."

Gideon sat down. His knees suddenly weakly.

"Tell me in detail why he died, and how it is that Scho-La-Nui, Galani, speaks through the lips of an Earthman."

"Brain-transplantation. It is impossible to remove a human brain from its casing without destroying vital tissue; my own body has also been irrevocably damaged in the process. Being only a soldier, and not a surgeon, I know nothing but that the insertion of a Martian brain in the skull-cavity formerly occupied by an Earthman's brain unavoidably destroys the human brain and the Martian body. The transfer is permanent."

Gideon struggled to push down the growing sense of horror. He looked at Ridenour's human body and thought of the tentacled monster's mind which now occupied it.

"What are the Suspects?" he asked, his mouth and lips suddenly dry.

"Galani minds which are now permanently occupying human bodies."

"Where are these operations performed on Earth?"

The body that was Ridenour's twisted, as Scho-La-Nui struggled against the drug that forced him to tell the truth.

"I—I do not wish to answer. Mel-El-Aben has said that the truth regarding the Suspects may be revealed to you, but not military information. I will not answer."

"I can spare your life if you tell me where the operations are being performed."

"You will tell the PD," Ridenour's lips said, the man's face contorted, "and they kill our most valuable surgeons."

"Tell me! Where are the operations performed on Earth?"

"The drug—" Scho-La-Nui said, apparently fighting its effects, "I will have—have to cease living—else I—I betray..."

The lips stopped as the mind of the Galani brain contracted the muscles of the human heart and brought it to a stop. Gideon felt for the pulse. There was none. There was an ominous silence about him. He stepped to one of the windows, and looked out from the side so that he would not be seen. The streets were empty. Further down could be seen police lines that prevented cars from passing. City police, their uniforms glistening in the evening sun, rode through with armored cars and stopped in front of the apartment house.

HE TURNED away and rushed towards the main entrance door. It was locked, apparently under mechanical control from police on PD orders. Unable to escape, he pushed the desk and other furniture in front of the door. There was not enough to hold them back, but a few seconds might be gained. He stepped to the teletypewriter and dialed the number of the PD Headquarters in Washington.

"Chief McDonough," he said to the

secretary's face, "PD Agent Gideon speaking. Vitally urgent. *Quick!*"

Whether the call came through or not he could not tell. The fumes from sedation gas, released by the police which filled the corridors, poured out from under the doorway. Gideon staggered toward the window and punched his fist through the glass. It was too late for he had breathed a draft of the sedation gas and felt his senses reeling. He could see the city before him, suddenly bathed in a brilliant flash of light. In the far distance a giant black mushroom filled the horizon. He stepped back to avoid the death-dealing radiation of the atomic explosion and then he felt himself falling into a deep, dark whirlpool.



CONSCIOUSNESS returned to Gideon, and he breathed it in like a man who had been suffocating. He lay upon a hard cot and beside him was a white table with an empty truth-serum hypodermic laying upon a few sheets of sterile gauze. At the foot of the bed was the vague outline of a man.

"Here are your eyeglasses," a deep voice said, "I guess you'll feel better with them."

Gideon put them on and looked into the iron-lined face of Chief McDonough, head of Planetary Defense.

"You were not alone on the case," McDonough said, raising his hand to still the flood of questions which he knew would come from Gideon. "Other agents corroborated your findings. Our loyal PD's moved in with the local police when we found the Taos office to be Suspect. We've been using truth-serum everywhere, for at last we've been able to produce it in quantity. Now we have a way of finding out Suspects, and we will ex-

terminate them. The construction of Galani brains is quite different when compared with ours. Simulation is impossible and X-rays of the skull will show immediately who is a Suspect. Mass X-rays, and the use of the truth-serum on all captured Suspects, will smash once and for all the secret invasion of the Galani."

Gideon got to his feet. There was still some weakness in his legs and a heavy, dull sensation surged through his brain. The effects of the sedation gas were wearing off and strength returned.

"I even took an X-ray of your head," McDonough said, with a faint smile; "we cannot afford to trust anyone until we are certain that they are not Galani intelligences occupying human bodies. You, my friend Gideon, are a human being! Thank the skies for that; considering the strange interest Mel-El-Aben had in you I often felt doubts."

Gideon reached for his clothes and quickly dressed. "That atomic explosion," he said, "the one I saw as I passed out in Ridenour's apartment—what was it?"

The Chief's face darkened. "The Newark pile blew up."

"Accident?"

"Sabotage, of course, but what proof can be found in radiating ruins? The possibility of accident has already been planted and nurtured in the Suspect-controlled press and Telefax. There has been a wave of sabotage in strategic factories and headquarters. One truth-serum plant has been lost; X-ray film factories and machines have been smashed. Now that we have the means for locating Suspects, the Galani are desperate. If they are to strike, this is the moment."

"This is the moment"—the words flashed through Gideon's mind. It meant final, conclusive war; for, if the secret organization of Suspects on Earth were smashed, Galani strength would be ended forever. Never again would their physicians and scientists be permitted to approach Earthmen.

Every factory, and every Galani city, would be kept under the strictest surveillance.

The proud Galani, whose ancestors had wandered across the skies when Earthmen were savages, would be reduced to museum-specimens in carefully-controlled reservations. Their proud spirit broken, they would soon die for their scientific efforts to keep the race going would be hindered and restricted.

This was their last chance. Whatever forces the Galani had would strike now.

"Project Victory," Gideon said, "is it ready?"

"The Senate is debating the fate of Mars now. We are due there in a few moments, and I wait for the second when I will pull the levers that set the atomic vessels sailing against that damned planet!"

WHEN THEY arrived in the Senate chambers they found the very walls lined with armed PD agents, their faces drawn and haggard. Several bodies lay slumped over their desks, blood flowing from blaster-wounds. Rows of Senators, some trembling and some unconcerned, stood behind a series of X-rays machines. As each man stepped through, the negative was instantly developed and a white-faced doctor pronounced the verdict. If the cranial photograph indicated a brain-construction different from that of normal Earthmen, the Senator was arrested and bound; those who struggled were shot. Apparently, the Suspects in the Senate knew their danger; when the X-ray machines were rolled into the chambers, they made a break for freedom and were shot down by the armed PD agents that encircled the walls.

Gideon saw with horror, when the examinations were finished, that one-fourth of the Senators, the most powerful body of men in the world, had been shot or arrested. Senator Burbank's body sprawled in the aisle until a guard came and dragged it away.

The President, his face aged twenty years, walked to the officiating desk and gently tapped his gavel. The silence was like that of the grave.

"The bodies among us," he said quietly, his voice sometimes breaking, "while appearing to be those of dear friends, house the minds of the Galani, whose professed intention it is to destroy the Earth and the human race. Their plan, discovered when we were on the brink of disaster, has been to not only murder us but to take over our bodies as well by transplantation of their minds. Trapped by the knowledge that Nature has decided their race to be unfit for perpetuation, they have attempted to take over human bodies in a final effort to preserve their dying species. That the human race has been saved from such extinction has been due in main part to the valiant work of PD agents McDonough and Gideon—who are still with us—and Ridenour and Munheim, who have lost their lives in the service of the Earth."



He paused for a few moments, unable to continue. When he spoke again, it was with the dull, set tones of a man who knows the inevitable result of the thing he must do.

"I will ask the Secretary," he said, "to review briefly the acts performed by the Galani in the last twenty-four hours."

The Senate chambers were silent as the Secretary walked to the speaker's desk. He leafed through the pa-

pers with trembling hands and summarized them.

"Seventy PD armored rockets were seized at Deimosport and occupied by Galani forces. The PD garrison at Marsalene has been taken by sedation gas and all its members taken to Galani hospitals where, according to the Telefax espionage screens still operating, operations removing and destroying their brains are being performed.

"Suspect groups in the largest Earth cities have taken over control. Los Angeles, Paris, and Shanghai have fallen overnight and declared themselves for the Galani. In eighteen other major centers battles are now taking place between PD and Galani forces. PD victory is assured in these skirmishes, but the War Department declares that if vessels operating from Mars bomb our production-centers, the ultimate issue of this struggle may be in doubt. Confused by Galani propaganda claims, many loyal Earthmen are joining the ranks of the Suspects."

A SUDDEN rumble shook the building and one of the walls split. The distant roar of jets and rockets could be heard. Uneasily the Senators looked about them at the shaking walls.

"It will not be necessary," the President interrupted, "to continue the summation of aggressive Galani attacks. Suffice it to say that the Capital itself is now under attack by Suspects."

Through the Senate chambers could be heard the labored breathing of the Senators and PD agents. The temporary lull was broken again by the roar of guns and the swish of bomb-laden jets over the Capital. A few moments later another explosion rent the air, cracking the walls. The bombs were coming nearer.

"Why aren't they using fission bombs?" Gideon whispered to McDonough. "It would take only one to destroy the Capital and most of the PD leadership."

"They either want to use our bodies," McDonough said softly, "and therefore must preserve them, or they feel we will be needed to act as collaborators and Quislings for Mars."

A messenger delivered a note to the President's desk. The wearied head of the Senate read it and then turned to the assembled people who sat waiting for the inevitable decision.

"Our Telefax espionage screens," he said, "have reported the assembling of a huge fission-bomb fleet on Mars. These vessels constitute our entire fleet which has been captured by traitor-Suspects. The fleet is being reconditioned and manned by Galani. It will be ready to sail against us in a few days."

"Mr. President!" a gray-haired man, a virtual patriarch among the Senators, rose to his feet. "Mr. President! I move that Project Victory—the atomic destruction of the planet Mars—be released immediately!"

"Aye! Aye! Aye!"

A deafening roar swept up from the Senators. Even the calm PD agents lining the walls gave loose to hoarse shouts and cheers. Dignified men stood upon the desks and yelled.

Gideon was swept along in the mass hysteria and shouted with them. One or the other race had to be destroyed. Since the Galani attempted such an insidious invasion, they could never be trusted again. With the destruction of Mars, the main base of the fighting Suspects would be smashed; in due time, isolated resisting bands would be wiped out and the threat of the Galani destroyed forever.

"Death to Mars! Destroy the Red Planet!"

The President hammered with his gavel upon the stand.

"It is so moved!" he declared. "I order Project Victory!" Turning to the white-faced McDonough he yelled, "Do your duty!"

Wordlessly McDonough turned away to the doors, Gideon followed him, pushing through the mob and

listening to the cheering of the Senators and the Agents.

"Free us from the Martian threat! Destroy the Galani threat! Victory! Victory!"

The Senate became a turmoil as the yells of its people filled the air. A great weight seemed to be lifted from their minds. Pale faces were now flushed with joy. The threat, which would have made monsters of them and their children, was about to be destroyed forever.

"*Death to the Galani!*"



THE STREETS of Washington were littered with bodies along the hastily-erected barricades. The jet-attack of the Suspects had failed and regiments of the loyal PD were mopping up isolated Suspect bands.

McDonough and Gideon commandeered tanks and sped towards the Virginia hills, which housed Project Victory's control station. An armed escort followed them, their guns firing warning salvos to every nearing plane or truck.

"Suspect bands are already attacking," Agent Carlisle reported as they neared the simple terra-cotta building which housed the controls.

"Attack immediately," McDonough ordered; "apparently they do not know its importance, or fission bombs would have been used. Gideon, Agent Hastings, and I will head for the controls; the rest of you will fight off any attacks that may come."

They left the tank, machine-gun blasts exploding overhead, and ran towards the building. A tank salvo had smashed the camouflaged doors and the group struggled past overturned building blocks. They fled towards the control-room, camouflaged among the

machinery-filled sections of the building. The air around them was ripped by gun-flashes from snipers. The hurrying Agents accompanying them were put to swift use, for at the doorway of the control room they faced a rudely-built barricade.

They fell downward as the first enemy volley blasted above them. A band of Suspects, apparently including one actual Galani, had attempted to break through the door. Finding this impossible, they had decided to defend it against any Earthmen until additional Suspect reinforcements were able to penetrate the PD defenses.

"Sedation gas!" Gideon yelled.

An Agent crawled forward, gun-tube in hand, and fired the fumes. The gas swirled upwards, and then pushed forward by fans, rolled down upon the Suspect barricade.

"Hold fire!" McDonough said; "they'll try to stop breathing for a few minutes, but one whiff should be enough."

Several of the Suspects jumped up from the barricade, guns in hand.

"Fire!"

They fell, their hands feebly clutching at gashed-open stomachs and lungs. A minute passed and then there was silence.

"Sterile gas!" McDonough shouted. It burst behind the rude barricade, its pink streamers flowing downward and cleansing the air.

"All clear!" McDonough said. They ran forward and jumped over the machine stacks that made the crude Suspect defense. "Have them all shot," he said, pushing aside blast equipment that had been placed against the door to the control room.

"The Martian, too, sir?" an Agent asked.

Gideon turned swiftly. Crushed among the battered machines, his tentacles still and a brown mass exuding from his mangled body, was the Galani surgeon, Mel-El-Aben.

"This crude gas," his tentacles rasped, "while dulling our senses is

not sufficiently effective for the Galani. You have slain my associates; will you complete the task?"

The guard's finger tightened on the trigger.

"Spare him," Gideon said, surprised at his own decision. "Bring him into the control-room with us; we may need to question him."

McDONOUGH looked at him curiously but said nothing. "Be sure to tie him up," he ordered curtly and then bent to the control-door, which opened mechanically to the word-control commands given it by the PD Chief.

McDonough and Gideon entered the control-room, which could decide the fate of a whole world. Agent Hastings dragged the body of Mel-El-Aben in after them and then shut the door, leaving the PD Agents on guard.

Once inside, Gideon was surprised by the simplicity of the room. Legend had given it many sizes and shapes; in reality, it was completely bare but for the series of screens lined against the wall, and a plain set of levers in the center.

Project Victory had been in existence for 200 years, constantly being enlarged and strengthened. Dispatch-ports around the world were controlled from this room. Mechanical computators made corrections every second in the controls of all hell-bomb vessels in the ports, so that no matter when they were released, they would head immediately for their predetermined target on Mars.

"Twenty launching ports," McDonough said, his voice awed despite his familiarity with the construction and nature of Project Victory. "Each one is completely ready, and only a handful need reach Mars to wipe out the planet forever!"

Mel-El-Aben, his tentacles mercilessly strapped down by Agent Hastings, uttered an oath. Gideon walked over to the Martian on the floor and helped him up to a sitting

position. He felt a wave of nausea as he touched the shifting scales and the tentacles. To hide his revulsion he turned to Hastings.

"Draw your gun," he said briskly, "if anything goes wrong, shoot to kill."

"In the years to come," Mel-El-Aben said, his voice thick because he could not move his tentacles freely—"in the years to come, James Gideon, you will regret this action; and remorse for the murder of the Galani will pursue you to the end of all time."

McDonough stood over the controls, working them and checking each against the screens which showed the rockets in their port cradles. He did not listen to the Galani.

Gideon resented the words: he, Gideon, was not a Suspect. His heart, flesh, bone, blood, and brain were Earth and his loyalty was only to the human race.

"How many thousands of *us* did you murder?" he demanded, in order to break off this strange feeling of guilt which Mel-El-Aben sought to force upon him.

The Galani made a gesture, which might have meant the same as the shrugging of shoulders. "It was necessary," he rasped; "did you not slaughter us by the millions when you first came to Mars?"

"But that was an insane war, and it was ended. Why begin again?"

"Begin? It never ended. Our technology was liquidated by Earthmen and for many years we bided our time, practicing the only skill you encouraged in us—surgery and medicine."

"But to attempt to take over a complete species!" Gideon interjected. "That meant giving up your bodies and living in a physical setting which must be as repulsive to you as your bodies are to us. Surely there could be some other solution."

MEL-EL-ABEN said, as three Earthmen in the control room watched him, "If there was, we did

not find it. Our race is ages old. Through endless mutations we have come to our final end—bodies of such complexity, and such perfection, that by your standards we are virtually immortal. But in achieving that end, Nature has betrayed us by rendering birth and the continuation of our species extremely difficult. In seven birth out of twelve, both parent and child die. Despite our individual ages is there any hope for the Galani race as a whole? None!"

"Metal robot-bodies! With them you would *actually* be immortal!" Gideon said; "that would have been a solution!"



"No!" Mel-El-Aben exclaimed. "You keep thinking in individual terms, while our concern is with the species as a whole. Remember that, through our ancestral memory—a thing foreign to you—each of *us* bears the conscience of our species. Individual Galani are important. Our task is to find a way to preserve the species when nature has dictated that we can no longer propagate at all. Occupying your bodies, we could reproduce and carry on the Galani traditions. Surgical transplantation of our brains to your bodies was the solution to our desperate problem."

"But you have lost," Gideon said, "lost completely."

"Have we?" Mel-El-Aben said. There was an inflection in his tentacle-created voice which Gideon did not understand.

"The controls are ready," McDonough said stiffly. Hastings stood by his side as if to give him courage in the execution of his task. The realization of the enormity of the destruction which would be unleashed upon Mars swept over the three Earthmen.

"There is no other, acceptable choice," Gideon said, suddenly remembering his father's words to him when he was still a child: *"Do not condemn in advance the actions of the Galani. There will come a time when you will understand your part in world history. Reserve judgment!"* He had not understood his father then and he did not understand him now. How could he reserve judgment when the horror and guilt of the Galani was so clearly evident?

McDonough breathed deeply. "May the future races of the world forgive me," he said, his voice shaken.

He reached for the first lever which would send an atomic-armed vessel to Mars. The lever came down savagely and with a clanking finality clicked in place.

All of them fastened anxious eyes upon the first group of telescreens. A huge rocket, monstrous in size and shape, twisted crazily in its cradle and then lurched sideways. A bright flash of fire burst upon the screen which then died and went blank. The second and third screens showed a pillar of smoke rising from the valley in which the rocket had been hidden.

"Score one for the Galani!" Mel-El-Aben said victoriously. "There are more of us placed in strategic positions than you imagine!"

MCDONOUGH'S face was suddenly white.

"Sabotage!" Hastings gasped.

Gideon knew well the meaning of the struggle that now cut lines upon the bomb-ports? By pulling the control-levers he would only be setting off the bombs upon the Earth itself, and

destroying countless millions of Earthmen.

"Delay!" Hastings cried; "have the rockets examined for sabotage before you release them!"

McDonough shook his head. "Galani vessels are already assembling on Mars. If they leave the planet, our weakcned and infiltrated PD forces could not cope with them. They would overrun the Earth, and the aid they could give the Suspects would be decisive."

Each of the rockets had been adjusted, first to spray disease-dust over a designated area, and then to crash its atomic load upon a pre-selected industrial center. The explosion of a rocket in its cradle on Earth would wipe out the disease-load, but the atomic destruction was still tremendous. Every last precaution had been taken to save the ports from infiltration by Suspects, but it needed only one traitor to smash the controls.

"The Fifth Port," Aben said, almost crazily, for he was on the brink of seeing his native planet annihilated. "The Fifth Port," he went on, "is only fifteen miles from New York City. Do you dare pull the lever and risk destroying the city? Our Suspects, remember, have been everywhere—even in the highest ranks of the PD and the Senate! If we had planted only one in the Fifth Port you will destroy New York. Do you dare pull that lever?"

McDonough's hand was upon the lever. Beads of sweat formed on his brow.

"Use the truth-serum on him!" Hastings said; "he would know which ports are sabotaged and which are not."

"I can order my mind to cease functioning," Mel-El-Aben replied coldly; "the serum cannot work on us, for we know how to die willingly. Answer, McDonough! Do you dare pull the levers?"

"What are your terms for peace?" McDonough said brokenly, his hand lying limp upon the switch.

"I am only a physician . . ." Mel-El-Aben began.

"Not true," Gideon replied, angrily; "each Martian is possessed of racial memory; and each one, despite his occupational or educational status, can speak for the whole planet."

Mel-El-Aben turned his tentacles toward Gideon so that the light-sensitive tips were focussed at him. "True," he said, "Each of us has inherited the knowledge and experience of millions of years. What is hard-won knowledge to you, is but instinct to us. Instinct, Gideon, remember that word!"

"What are your terms?" McDonough repeated weakly.



MEL-EL-ABEN said. "To show our sincerity we will destroy each of our laboratories on Earth. We vow never to effect another brain-transfer to a human body, as long as our race survives."

"What do you ask in turn?" McDonough demanded.

"Nothing but this: free immigration and free trade between the planets. Reaffirm the 30th amendment guaranteeing personal privacy against every sort of examination, physical, and mental. Destruction of all existing medical records."

"It sounds reasonable," Hastings muttered uneasily.

"Reasonable—hell!" McDonough exploded. "Gideon, you tell him what it means."

Gideon nodded. "It means that we promise not to hunt down, or even attempt to locate, the Suspects planted in our race. They will intermarry, without our knowledge and become one of us; their children will be Galani in heart and mind. With free immigra-

tion, and the Suspects already living on Earth and occupying positions of power, Earth's supremacy is over forever. Within a decade, their technology would sweep over ours; whatever their secret invasion had not done, their weapons would finish."

"Accept our terms," Mel-El-Aben said, "and you will have peace."

"Peace as slaves!"

"Peace! What is your answer?"

McDonough paused and looked at Mel-El-Aben whose tentacles twisted and strained in excitement. In McDonough's eyes was revulsion and horror.

"This," he said savagely, "is our answer."

He reached across the control-board and pulled down one lever after another, blindly. They clicked angrily in place.

"You'll destroy the Earth!" Hastings gasped.

McDonough turned away from the board, haggard and worn. Mel-El-Aben was impassive. The tentacles were still, and there was no sign of what he thought or felt.

They all turned to stare at the screens. Each of the plates burst into activity. The Third flashed and was silent.

"Another city gone," Hastings said quietly; "that was the port near Chicago."

The fourth screen turned dim, its surface clouding; then the fifth screen faded, too. They stared, tense. Would these screens too become suddenly blank, indicating an explosion caused by Suspect-made sabotage?

"It cannot—it cannot," Gideon said, trying to reassure himself and still the growing sense of panic.

The screens suddenly cleared. The enormous launching cradles that held the rockets were empty. The vessels had escaped from Earth, unharmed, and were now carrying their loads of devastation to Mars.

A sigh came up from the three Earthmen.

"It was a bluff," Gideon said to

Mel-El-Aben, "a gigantic bluff. You didn't get through all our defenses."

McDonough sat down, hands trembling. His eyes fell upon the blank screens, which indicated ports that had blown up on Earth. The majority of the screens were clear, but a few showed that the Suspects had succeeded.

“WHAT A PRICE to pay,” McDonough said wearily, looking at the blank screens which indicated sabotaged ports. “But we have won after all.”

Have we? Gideon thought. Now that the bombing-flights had been launched, he realized the tension he had been undergoing. His hands were moist and his head and body ached. The destruction of an entire planet with a culture a million years old was a terrible price to pay...



Mel-El-Aben faced the screens, silent and unmoving. The color had drained from his tentacles and he appeared dead. Gideon felt a surge of pity which shocked him. He had no right to feel any sympathy for the Galani for he knew what their intentions were. The Galani were monsters who had to be destroyed.

“There are still the Suspects,” Hastings said.

“We will finish them,” McDonough sighed. “Without reinforcements from Mars, we will annihilate the armed

bands. If there are any still hidden among us, X-rays will find them.”

“Once the bombs have landed on Mars,” Gideon said, “and destroyed the planet; they will have lost the war. The psychology of the Galani is such that, once they realize the inevitability of defeat, their confidence in victory shaken, they will lose all hope. Isn't that correct, Mel-El-Aben?”

The Galani waved his tentacles in agreement. “When we lose all hope, we shall die,” he said simply; “now that you know the surgery we have used to transplant our brains to human bodies, you will search out our laboratories on Earth and kill the few tentacled-Martians that remain. We expect this.”

“How long before the screens show the explosions of the bombs on Mars?”

McDonough glanced at the figures which raced in a band across the control board. “An hour at the most,” he said, raising his hand to his forehead. “The thing is done, but I have a strange feeling of regret—almost of sadness. It was as if, for a moment I could see things from the Galani point of view.” He saw Gideon's quizzical look. “Nonsense,” he said, as if aware of what Gideon was thinking, “I am not a Suspect, and neither are you—else we would not have pulled these levers. This feeling I have is just—just—strange...”

Gideon's heart began to hammer. He could feel the pulse-beat in his fingertips and the back of his head. For one startling moment he knew what McDonough had been trying to say. A vast picture of Martian life and history seemed to suddenly beat through his brain and then die away slowly.

He looked at Mel-El-Aben, tied there so securely, and wondered. He lifted his fingertips to his forehead and felt the line between hair and scalp. No, he had not been operated on without knowing it. He felt reassured; he was an Earthman—of that there was no doubt. It was only the overwhelming

nature of the catastrophe they were about to witness on the screens that made him so uneasy. One does not see the destruction of an entire planet every day.

Mel-El-Aben's sight-tentacles were turned to him. "I observe," the Galani rasped, "that you are no longer wearing your eyeglasses."

GIDEON brought his hand back and forth before his face. The thick lenses that he had worn ever since childhood were no longer there. His mind jumped back and the events of the preceding hour—the rush through the streets, the fighting around the control room, the lifting of the barricade—somewhere in those hectic events the glasses had slipped or fallen from his face and—miracle of miracles—instead of seeing a hazy, fog-ridden world, he saw with clarity and precision. His eyes were perfect.

A terror swept through him. "You operated on me without my knowing it!" If this had been done, perhaps other changes were also effected.

"No," the Galani said, "we have not touched you. Your body has merely overcome a physical, muscular disability. We Martians have long studied the operation of racial memory and instinct, and have come to understand such matters which are utterly beyond the comprehension of Earthmen. Life—whether Martian or Earthian, or other—strives constantly for perfection, and for the evasion or postponement of disintegration. The long life of the Galani is due not to any peculiar structure of our cells, but to the fine control which our minds have over our body. You Earthmen had often approached the secret in the religious cults which believed that "sickness is error; there is no death"; but your undeveloped brains were unable fully to master your physical constituent particles. In your case, Gideon, your brain came to your aid in a critical moment when you needed sight so badly. Just as men under pressure find

increased strength and endurance, so in the same way your mind can control and shape your body, when urgently necessary."

Mel-El-Aben's words fell on deaf ears for the eyes of the three Earthmen were fastened upon the screens. They waited, in fascinated horror, for the bombs to land upon Mars. Would that hour never end? The red globe of Mars shone so hugely upon the screen.

"Zero hour minus ten minutes," the mechanical voice from the control board rang out.

Gideon felt the nape of his neck quiver with excitement. Mel-El-Aben was still talking about instinct, but Gideon did not listen. It seemed that the Galani was trying to tell him something—to prod his memory and bring out knowledge forgotten or not yet remembered.

"The newborn child," the Martian said, "possesses all the instincts of his species—but these do not manifest themselves at once. As the body grows, so do the instinctual capabilities. Some instincts, for example, will lie dormant until maturity; are you listening to me, Gideon?"

The rocket-bombers were nearing their destination and in a few minutes the rain of death would fall upon the planet. Gideon felt a surge of excitement, and his head began to ache. He reached for some aspirins in the medical chest near the control-board; a stabbing pain jabbed through his skull, from forehead to back and dipping down in the center as if reaching for his soul. The shock sent him gasping.

"Zero minus five."

Gideon leaned weakly against his seat. McDonough's eyes were also closed as if in pain. Mel-El-Aben's sighted tentacles turned from one to the other, while Hastings stared at the screens showing Mars' huge red form waiting for the bombs.

THE PAIN came in shocking throbs. Brain tumor, he thought. He had read enough to know the symptoms.

It was hard to think clearly. Ideas flashed through a pain-wracked mind. They were confused ideas and images, wordless thoughts seemingly without meaning and then suddenly a strange significance. He thought he saw the beginnings of life from primeval slime, and the long, long drive of the cell to shape itself and to fight against a hostile world. He saw the cell split and become two and then four and eight. He saw this mathematical progression through the ages of life struggled to develop and to master a world that sought to destroy it.

The evolution and growth of a species began to have a meaning and a purpose he had never suspected. He began to feel one with the primeval cell and the millions and billions of living forms that stretched across the panorama of endless centuries. The drama of life spanned untold years and new suns grew old while the struggle for life continued.

"Zero minus four."

Gideon shook himself. Only one minute had passed but it seemed like uncounted years. Something clawed at his brain as if unformed thoughts were striving for expression. He looked at McDonough. The Chief's face was drawn and lines of pain were marked on him—as if he, too, were going through some inner struggle. Only Hastings was serene and confident as he watched the screen and saw the rockets maneuver over Mars for their pre-calculated positions. In a few minutes the flashes would come and the surface of that red world would be wiped clean of its civilization.

"The Galani have lost forever."

Mel-El-Aben, dying member of a doomed race, glanced from McDonough to Gideon. "Have we?" he asked.

Gideon tried to ignore the pain in his head. "What do you mean?"

Mel-El-Aben paused, watching the

screen.

"Zero minus three."

"Is it not strange," Aben said, "how vanity and conceit form so large a part of Earthian psychologies? Could you not guess that the racial memory each of us have would make it forever impossible for any of us to accept Earth's rule over our planet? Was it not clear that eventually our superior minds would find some way to destroy your race and make ours survive—no matter the cost?"

"You did find the method," McDonough said; "the transplantation of your minds into our bodies. We have discovered that and will now destroy you. We have won the battle."

"Zero minus two."

"But have you?" Mel-El-Aben said triumphantly. "How long," he demanded, "do you think we have been in possession of the technique for transplantation?"

"Twenty years," Gideon said hesitantly. There was something here that cast a shadow over his soul. Uncertainty gripped him as he waited for the answer.

"No! No! No!" Aben said, his weakened tentacles quivering from excitement; "*not twenty years but for two hundred and fifty!*"

"That's a lie!" McDonough answered sharply; "we would have known! We would have found the Suspects sooner."

"Vanity and conceit!" Aben said. "You cannot accept the fact that we had made long-range plans for your destruction and for the inevitable victory of the Galani way of life. It was only when we began to enlarge our operations—to include the smuggling of Galani physicians on a large scale to Earth, that you discovered a secret that we kept for over two centuries!"

"Zero Minus One!"

MEL-EL-ABEN said, "For two hundred and fifty years, we have eaten away at the core of the human race. We have transplanted our brains

and souls into your bodies. How could you recognize those of us who become Earthmen in every outward visible form? We lived your lives; acted your lives; even thought like you. We even bred children!"

"Stand by for explosions!"

"Yes! Suspects bear children and these sons and daughter are Galani! The God-given gift which will save us from annihilation is ours at last. Two hundred and fifty years—eight generations of births, deaths, and marriages. Those of us who earned transplantation to human bodies became mortal and died as you died—but they had children whose brains and instincts are Galani!"

The words were like bullets aimed at Gideon and McDonough. Gideon realized at last why Mel-El-Aben had been so interested in him, and why his own father had repeatedly told him to avoid passing judgment on the Galani. *"I knew his father quite well..."* Mel-El-Aben had said to Dr. Fellbank. James Gideon's father was a Suspect; that human body he knew and loved possessed a Martian Galani brain.

"You know what hybrids are," Mel-El-Aben said, "but do you know which characteristics can be inherited and which cannot when a Galani brain occupies a human body? We know! Neither your X-rays nor your truth-serums will work on the children of Suspects, but we know!"

"When does instinct manifest itself? When the species is in danger! The racial memories which lie dormant in all the children and all the descendants of Suspects will come to the fore when needed. You, Gideon! You, McDonough! You, the billions throughout the world who think yourselves Earthmen! Listen to this: our racial memory is in you. It will come to each man and woman when he and she reach maturity. You, who are the children of Suspects—and there are billions of you—you who are the descendants of this new hybrid—half-man, half-Galani, listen to me! *You are Martian! Martian! Martian!"*

"Bombs away! Bombs away! Bombs away!"

THE SCREENS turned a brilliant red as the planet met the deadly barrage of atomic weapons. The Galani cities were blasted and the surface scarred by the terrible, shattering explosions. One by one, the death-dealing mushroom clouds spread over the crimson planet and radioactive dust covered the fields spreading ever wider. The holocaust smashed the cities and erased life from the plains. Mars, Mars the Eternal, was dead.

Gideon's thoughts sped back to childhood. He remembered the sad voice of his father, alone among Earthmen whom he did not understand: *"Remember me when you realize what you are and what I am. There will be millions like you. You will not be alone."*

He knew now that the invasion was complete. The shock of the destruction of Mars would rouse the latent instinct of every man and woman who, like himself, was descended from a Galani-occupied human being. The knowledge of the history of Mars—incredibly old—swept over him, and the acquired knowledge of Earth—hurriedly gleaned from dull books—faded away.

He looked at the red, hellish screens that showed the death of the world. With pity he turned his eyes to the body of Mel-El-Aben, who had died. In McDonough's eyes he saw friendship and understanding; both of them now shared the racial memories of a species countless millions of years old. They looked at Hastings, poor weak Earthman, ignorant and useless. *Let us spare him*, Gideon thought, *for there are few like him now.* They, the Suspects, would destroy the minority of Earthmen.

"We have won," he said to himself, "despite the destruction of our native planet, Mars."

"I," said James Gideon in whose now flooded the memories of long dead ancestors, "am proud to be a Galani."





The Lobby

(continued from page 8)

Letters

NO CORPSE AT ALL

Dear RWL:

I just had the pleasure of reading your new magazine and I must say that I enjoyed it equally as well as I have enjoyed your other two books. People keep harping that the pulps are dying, but if one can believe one's eyes at the newsstands, the science fiction pulp isn't dead—if it is, it is quite a lusty corpse. And to those of us whose love for the pulps goes back to Munsey's *Argosy*, it is, indeed, gratifying to see your three books that uphold the age-old tradition of pulpfdom: excitement, human interest, cleanliness—and, above all, entertainment.

Whether a story is set on Mars or in the timeless West, or, perchance, a big city's streets, the one thing we, the purchasers, are looking for is entertainment. Although I am identified with the fan-field as a writer and reader, associated with the fanzines, I am, first of all a seeker of entertainment. I'm not looking for big-name authors, fine paper, trimmed edges. I don't give a particular hoot how the cover is painted, nor do I care who draws the pictures that illustrate a story. It is the reading-matter that I'm interested in. I want a story that takes me away from the here-and-now into the glamourous future; or to the far-away universe, or to mysterious Venus or red Mars. I want a yarn of pure fantasy that will carry me along on a magic carpet through strange and exotic adventures. I want stories that are peopled with people who are basically the same as you or I, but who are endowed with a certain "something" that lifts them out of the ordinary—something that makes them heroic. I want stories that have the flavor of Tom Swift, the realness (humanness?) of Tom Sawyer, the charm of Heidi, the realism of Caldwell, the beauty of De Maupassant and the imagination of Burroughs. I want stories that are short, and

stories that are long. Funny stories, sad stories, and in-between stories. But most of all, I want stories that are pleasing—that leave one with a warm glow and the feeling of complete satisfaction, and a wish that "I had written that." That's a large order, RWL, and no editor, pulp or slick can fill it completely. But I do know that you, and most any conscientious pulp-editor, will be in there pitching, and that every issue you produce will be the best you can get together at the time of going to press.

Story rating: 1. "Ennui", 2. "I Am Tomorrow", 3. "X" For Expendable", 4. "Knowledge is Power", 5. "Blood Lands", 6. "Public Enemy", 7. "Blunder Enlightening", 8. "Translator's Error", 9. "The Einstein Rocket". (This is perhaps an unfair rating. Anderson presented his subject well, and it was an exceptionally good article. While I wouldn't like to see articles discontinued, I like fiction better. So, with one rating the reading matter in order of one's preference, the article takes last place.)

As to future issues: Try to get a variety of authors. One of the reasons for the pulp mags almost passing out of existence was the tight little group of professionals who lived almost within the shadow of the publishing-house, who furnished about all the fiction used. Don't be afraid to use off-trail stories. The charm of any magazine is finding a gem of the unusual occasionally. Use a completely screwball yarn once in awhile. Stick to new material. Nobody likes to read a story over unless it is especially good and the anthologists are around for selection those. Keep the book reviews as they are now. They are the best in the field. Don't slay away from a piece of good fantasy just because the title is *Dynamic SCIENCE Fiction*. Fantasy is good for any general-interest magazine, even westerns. Keep articles, as long as they are not of the text-book variety. Try to

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LITTLE GREEN MAN

By Noel Loomis

(illustrated by C. A. Murphy)

The little green man claimed he represented the population of the Cold Belt, here on Uranus — all five of them. And he wanted the Earthlings to depart at once . . .

THE LITTLE green man with the pink eyebrows and the peacock-feather tail appeared upon the porcelain bench in the chemical laboratory. "I am giving you," he told Engar, "one last warning. If you Earth-people don't get this station off of Uranus within three days, I am going to take steps."

He talked with a peculiar bird-like whistle, and his appearance was so odd, that Engar never had been able entirely to get rid of the feeling that the being was talking to hear his head rattle—except for the little man's golden eyes.

Ordinarily, those eyes were soft and gentle, and in keeping with his general appearance; but at this moment, the little man was obviously angry. His golden eyes were burning with a strange fire that gave Engar a very uncomfortable feeling. Surely there was nothing the being man could do to injure Earth-people—but he seemed so sure of himself.

Engar, sitting on his chromium stool with the tape-recorder log before him, watching the shifting colors up and down the hundred-foot ion-exchange columns, as the rare-earth solutions seeped down through the synthetic resins, was distinctly uncomfortable. He squirmed a little on the stool, making a mental note that No. 3 column was



"Our spotlight shows that the plants are growing fast."

about ready for a draw-off; he mustn't let the little man distract him, for this draw-off would be chemically pure praesodymium—the end toward which the columns had been working for weeks.

"I am afraid," the other man said—and his bird-like voice went up an octave—"that you are not giving serious attention to my words."

"Yes, I am," replied Engar, watching the peach-colored ring beginning to form near the bottom of the column. He looked up at the little green man and started to protest his friendship, but the light from those golden eyes was too intense for him; he had to look away. "After all," he said, "I'm only a laboratory-technician here."

"Technically," the Uranian said, "you are telling the truth; but morally you are evading the fact that you are a very high-type man for an Earth-man."

Engar was a proud young man, but also rather modest. He didn't answer, but kept his eyes on the column and its shifting colors.

"It would be obvious to anybody but a Frogman, that Earth would send only the pick of her scientists to an outpost like this."

"That might be true," Engar agreed, "but it still is a fact that I am actually nothing but a worker here."

"You have a superior, haven't you?"

"Yes," said Engar, seeing now, instead of the ion-exchange column, the heart-shaped face of Corinne Madison, with her black hair and clean white skin, and her constant attempts to be business-like, instead of feminine. One look at Corinne was enough to tell anybody that such a transformation was hardly suited to her—and Engar had taken that look. "But she would not have authority to dismantle the plant here."

"Then somebody back on Earth has," the being said, and his insistence began to be annoying. Suddenly Engar wished he would go away; it was utterly ridiculous that such a creature should be making threats. After all,

Earth had attained a technological development far beyond anything found in the Solar System. Of course, there were individuals—and seven species here and there on the various planets—who had some rather unusual personal powers; but those, on the whole, were as nothing compared to the combined resources of Earth technology. For a moment Engar was tempted to speak sharply to the little man and get rid of him; but then he remembered they were constrained to be courteous to all peoples no matter what the circumstances. He said, "Very well; I will relay your message to Earth."

THE LITTLE man's voice went down to its normal tone. "I'll be back tomorrow."

Engar was getting ready to touch the button to set the draw-off in motion. "Your day," he pointed out, "is less than eleven hours, and it will take around three hours for a message to make a one-way trip to Earth by microwave. Two billion miles, you see, is a long distance, and—"

"Six hours for communication!" the little man snapped, and added, "Tomorrow will give you plenty of time anyway."

"They will have to think it over there on Earth," Engar pointed out.

The little man's golden eyes began radiating again with a brilliance that hurt Engar. "You call yourselves a race of intelligent creatures. Does it take days, then, for your great minds to reach a decision?"

It was apparent that the Uranian, living in a portion of the big planet where there were few other inhabitants—if any—would have difficulty understanding how things were done on Earth, where conferences had to be called and men from all parts of the Earth had to meet for an important matter such as this. Furthermore, it was scarcely conceivable that Earth, after spending twenty years and several billion dollars preparing for this work, would reverse herself and with-

draw the entire installation at the behest of one little green man. As a matter of fact, Engar had no idea that the station's director would even transmit such a message to Earth.

There was one other factor to be considered: the ion-exchange columns represented Engar Jarvin's life-work. Ion-exchange was his specialty; he had studied it exhaustively; that was why he had been picked for the station on Uranus. The huge, hundred-foot columns with their ten-thousand gallon charges that lasted for weeks, were his special babies; he couldn't go away and leave them. And there was the minor and personal factor: how would he ever be able to pick up his career back on Earth, if he left this station for no reason that would bear explanation? Hard-headed scientists on Earth would never accept his story of the little green man—and nobody else had seen the Uranian. No, back on Earth they would be very polite, but at their luncheons they would say in casual tones, "Engar Jarvin cracked up out there on Uranus. Too bad. He was headed for a great career."

Well—Engar took a deep breath. What he wanted to do right now was get rid of the little man without making him angry. He liked the being—had liked him ever since the first day the little man had appeared in the laboratory out of nowhere to ask questions; Engar had answered him courteously because, after all, the little man had been on Uranus first. At least, Engar assumed that.

THE SELENIUM-CELL flashed a warning, and Engar started the draw-off. Then he looked up at the little man. "Who shall I say is requesting our—er—withdrawal from Uranus?" he asked.

"Nolos."

"It would help," Engar suggested, "if I could say that you represent some substantial body of Uranians."

Nolos began to fume. "Naturally, I cannot represent the Spiders who

live in the warm-spot; you may say I represent the Cold Belt of Uranus."

"About how many citizens?"

"All five of them."

"Did you say five?"

"Five."

Engar sighed. There was so little ground for understanding between them that it was hopeless. Five opposed to five billion! "I will give your message to my director," Engar said finally.

Nolos seemed somewhat mollified. "I shall be back in exactly three days," he announced, and added, "The most stupid person in the ten planets should be able to make up his mind in that length of time."

The draw-off had started. Engar watched the peach-colored liquid pouring out of the spigot at the base of the column for a moment. Then, puzzled, he looked up at Nolos. How did Nolos know there were ten planets? It was the year 2402, and Stygia had been discovered less than fifty years before; Engar felt certain the being had had no contact with humans until Engar, himself, had come with the first shipment of material to establish the station on Uranus.

The Earthman remembered what a headache he had had, trying to check in all the stuff; moving around through Uranus' methane atmosphere with a plastic-bubble over his head; dreading almost constantly the red flash of his indicators that would mean his heating power had gone off—for Uranus' temperature at the surface was minus nearly four hundred degrees Fahrenheit. It was so cold, that all the ammonia in Uranus atmosphere had frozen solid, long ago; if the power supply in a suit-heater went off, a man had better start running at top speed for the dome.

One workman had seen the red flash, but had finished lifting a shovelful of dirt—frozen ammonia—and then started to walk to the dome. He hadn't made it; it was less than fifty feet, but by the time they got him picked

up he was like a stone statue, only not as heavy.

That was one good thing about Uranus: although it was five times the diameter of Earth, its density was considerably less; and owing to its size, gravitational pull at the surface was about equal to that on Earth.

ENGAR REMEMBERED how they had put the body in the outer hold of one of the supply-cruisers for shipment back to Earth. He had thought it a long way to send a body just for burial, but there was sentiment to be considered; the man had a family. Besides, the ships wouldn't have loads going back, anyway.

He had watched the blazing trail of the rockets in their trans-orbital arc—a path of foaming red and yellow flame through the sea-green atmosphere—and he wondered then how many more men would go back to Earth the same way. He sat on a camp-stool in the dome, after everybody else had gone to bed, with his log in his lap; that was when the little green man had appeared out of nowhere. He stood just inside the plastic door of the dome, his golden eyes glowing, and Engar wondered fleetingly how he had come through the cold.

The peacock-feathered tail spread wide and the being said, "What are you doing here?"

It had taken Engar aback for a moment, because the surveyors' reports had shown no living entities on Uranus proper, except for the big Spiders who lived in Uranus' only warm spot—which was fifty thousand miles away, near the pole that pointed always toward the Sun.

Engar studied the little man, as much as he could do so politely, observing the sea-greenness of his skin, the pink of his eyebrows, the bird-like whistle of his talk, and realizing at last that the little man had spoken Earth-language. Then he realized, too, that the little man had asked him a question.

"Earth has been forced to go to

other planets for many of the rare elements," said Engar; "it happens that Uranus is peculiarly rich in some of them."

"Which ones?"

"All of the rare earths—especially praesodymium."

"What good is praesodymium to you?"

"With its molecules properly aligned by the application of very high-voltage and high-frequency current, and when properly alloyed with certain other elements, it forms a substance that acts as a gravitational shield."

"Why," asked the little man, "do you need to protect yourselves from gravity?"

"So we can, for instance, go to other planets."

The other looked disgusted. "You want praesodymium—so you can go to other planets to find more praesodymium; is that it?"

"It rather sounds like an oversimplification," said Engar.

"I am beginning to wonder," the being retorted, "if anything can be made too simple for the mind of an Earthman."

But Engar pointed out, "I am hardly responsible for the forces that move Earthmen; they do as they do, and they always have done that way."

"That," said the little man, "is the first sensible statement you have made."

Engar kept discreetly silent.

The little man fanned his tail out a couple of times. Then he said, "I don't know if I'm going to like it. We'll wait and see."

He appeared a number of times after that—always when Engar was alone. He talked rather generally, but always with that air of condescension that was hard to put a finger on—perhaps because it seemed, well, *justified*. And occasionally he asked some very sharp questions—especially when the tall ion-exchange columns went up; and either he knew what Engar was talking about, or he didn't have the faintest idea, for he did not pursue the

subject of ion-exchange. He seemed more interested in Earthmen as individuals.

He appeared a number of times, and there were several things he didn't like: the big shovels biting through Uranus' frozen-ammonia soil to get at the rare-earth minerals beneath; the rocket ships with their reaction-motors searing great molten paths along Uranus' surface; the waste-gases from the processing-plant at the station. But, Engar recalled, the little man had not become wrought up until about the time Corinne Madison came to the station as director. Perhaps the being man had felt Engar's own perturbation over that—for Corinne was two years younger than Engar; and certainly with no better background. Engar had resented it for a while, and it was during that period that the little green man had begun to talk in an unfriendly manner.

NOW ENGAR looked at him, wondering just what the Uranian thought he could do against Earth's technology. Nolos was ruffling his tail feathers; the "eyes" in the feathers grew larger and more iridescent, until they shone like fire; then the being collapsed them, and Engar knew he was getting ready to go back to wherever he had come from.

He did. Engar glanced at the column and saw that the draw-off was nearly complete; his finger went to the button. When he looked up again, the little man was gone. Engar stopped the draw-off, feeling rather pleased with the operation of the ion-exchange column. He thought that this batch—some twenty liters—when distilled would be a very good grade of prae-sodymium, usable without further refining. He checked the columns and saw that presently No. 6 would be ready for a draw-off too.

But the pneumatic door to the director's office whispered, and Corinne Madison came out, walking rather hard on her heels. "Mr. Jarvin," she said crisply, "I have asked you before

to notify me when you are contemplating any sort of activity that will generate intensive radiation."

Engar looked up at her. Her black hair was glossy against the white starched linen of her jacket, and she knew how to make good use of it too, for—

"Mr. Jarvin!" Her brown eyes narrowed.

"Yes, Miss Madison?" He glanced at No. 6 column and set the warning cell, then stood up. He couldn't help it if he was a head taller than she was.

Now she had to bend her head back to look at him.

"As you well know," he said, "there is no radiation connected with the ion-exchange columns."

"I know a number of things," she said indignantly, "and none of them are good."

"Please enumerate, Miss Madison."

"One," she said, "you superintended the construction of this entire plant. Two, you designed and built the ion-exchange columns. Three, you are well aware of your importance on Uranus. Four, you resented my coming here as your superior. Five, I have no doubt you could make those columns radiate if you chose to. Six, you are too damned handsome, and you know it!"

He looked down at her and took a full breath. For a moment he felt like putting his arms around her, but restrained himself; after all, she was his boss, and one did not go around hugging one's boss, did one—or did one? He was unable at the moment to recall a comparable situation.

SHE WENT on, "This is the third time hard radiation has thrown my calculator out of adjustment and this time I have traced it to you, Mr. Jarvin!" Triumphantly she held up a five-by-seven negative. "You can see for yourself."

He glanced at it. "Those streaks do look like radiation, Miss, but—"

"After the last time, when it became apparent that someone was de-

liberately creating trouble for me, I began to investigate, Mr. Jarvin. I found, among other things, that you yourself—at one time—expected to be made director of this station."

"But—"

"Don't try to alibi," she said. "I know now that you would stoop to any sort of scurvy trick to get me out of here. I do not doubt that you would even try to get the post closed entirely, if you thought you could—just to get rid of me."

He began to feel uncomfortable.

"It may interest you to know my own reasons for coming to Uranus, Mr. Jarvin."

"It certainly would," he said warmly. "A lone girl—and, I might say, a beautiful girl—asking to be sent to Uranus with seventeen men—"

She colored, and he hastened on. "Certainly your conduct is above reproach, Miss Madison, but it does seem a long way for a young girl to come from Hollywood and Vine."

"I certainly did *not* come here from Hollywood," she informed him. "I was a nuclear physicist at the University of California, and I had some ideas to work out in regard to a catalyst that would change fission-energy into some form of energy besides heat—so that it could be used directly as a power-source. Do you follow me?"

"I rather think so," he murmured, watching the movements of her expressive lips.

"It was essential that I establish a laboratory at some place where there would be no interference from radiation originating in, or caused by, the Sun. This plant was being installed, and I applied for a post here, expecting to do my experimental work in my spare time. And I assure you, Mr. Jarvin, that I was quite astonished when they appointed me director of the plant. They told me it was the only post open that would give me time to pursue my other work."

He nodded, watching her.

"I was also astonished when I reached here to find that I was to

be over the man who had built the plant; but I assumed the board back on Earth knew what it was doing, and I went to work. Then various little annoyances cropped up, culminating in the radiation that makes it impossible to use my calculator. So the last time this disturbance happened," she informed him, "I laid a trap. I put film at various places around the walls—and here is the proof. This negative was in the center of my wall on your side, Mr. Jarvin."

Engar glanced at No. 6 and saw there was plenty of time left. "I'm very sorry, Miss Madison, but I know nothing about it," he said at last.

"It took you long enough to think up that evasion," she retorted.

HE ANSWERED slowly. "Miss Madison, my life-work is bound up in these columns; it is my duty to make them do the job they were designed for. Otherwise I know nothing about all this." He took the negative and examined it more closely. "There is more hard radiation," he conceded again. "Not enough to bother anyone who has had a full immunization, of course, but certainly enough to throw your calculator off."

"Of that fact," she said icily, "I am well aware. What I want to know is, what are you going to do about it?"

He said without much hope, "I'll go over the ion-exchange lab, but I don't think it will turn up anything."

"Probably not," she said acidulously.

"Why don't you come in and check for yourself?"

"How do you think it would look," she asked, "for the director of the Earth-station on Uranus to run around with a Geiger counter looking for stray radiation?"

He assumed it was a rhetorical question. "I'm just trying to be helpful."

Too late he saw that she was furious. The fire rose in those brown eyes, and she did not back away an inch. "The next time this happens, Mr. Jarvin,

vin, I shall expect your resignation."

He opened his mouth but closed it again, kept his indignation in check. "This is a strange planet, Miss; I would suggest we do not know all about it."

Her grim smile was his answer. He kept his lips tightly closed. She spun on one high heel and marched stiffly from the room. He watched the many colors and hues from the columns reflected from the stiff white starch of her uniform as she passed them, and he wondered what was throwing her calculator out of adjustment.

He picked up the negative from his bench as he sat down. There was plenty of hard radiation—the straight marks of gamma rays; the curved lines of charged particles; the sprayed burst of a large atom hit head-on by a cosmotron. He frowned and laid the negative down. No. 14 was giving an alarm. He thought it likely that the next day or so would be very busy for him, for all of the columns had been charged at about the same time....

•

It was the next day—Uranian day, that is—before he remembered the little green man with the pink eyebrows—Nolos, he had called himself. By that time Engar was tired and sleepy and hardly able to think clearly; but he remembered Nolos' warning, and he also remembered Corinne Madison's ultimatum over the radiation. One thing was quite certain: after Corinne's statement that she thought he would go to any length to get rid of her, or words to that effect, it was not even to be hoped that she would entertain the idea of sending a message suggesting discontinuance of the station....

TWO DAYS later the columns were working down through the salts of illinium; Engar was beginning to relax, when the little green man appeared again.

"Hello," said Engar. "Glad to see you."

"Are you indeed," asked Nolos. His golden, glowing eyes took in the ion-exchange laboratory at a glance. "You are still operating the columns," he said in his bird-like voice. "Am I to assume that the answer from Earth was negative?"

Engar swallowed, then allowed himself the luxury of prevarication. After all, it was what the answer would have been anyway. "I am afraid so," he said.

The peacock-feather tail opened up and pulsed slowly, but the little man's golden eyes did not burn as they had the time before. "I am sorry," Nolos said finally. "It is going to take a terrific expenditure of energy by the five of us to get you off of Uranus."

Engar looked at the being's wide-fanning tail and then at the glowing eyes; he felt uneasy. "I don't understand why you are so set against our being here. I know there are some things you don't like, but we aren't actually hurting you, are we?"

"Not too much—right now," conceded Nolos, "but what about tomorrow?"

"Tomorrow?"

"Today you want praesodymium. Perhaps tomorrow you will want ammonia. What will happen to Uranus, then? Isn't Earth's history one continuous record of a people wanting something owned by somebody else?"

Engar frowned. "It is true that Earth-people as a whole are aggressive. But that is a biological drive, and not something we can put down at will. Moreover, there are many of us who think that eventually that drive will be turned to good use for the entire Solar System."

But Nolos did not seem to be interested in argument. He disappeared....

•

It was two days later that the head man on the big shovels, Chuck Delbert, came into the ion-exchange lab pull-

ing off his heated gloves. "I thought you might be interested, Mr. Jarvin, in something that's going on out there, seeing that you're the oldest man in the place and sort of daddy to the station."

"I am interested in everything around here," said Engar. "After all, we know very little about Uranus, and whenever there is a chance to increase that knowledge—"

"Well," said Chuck, "it's like this; there's stuff growing out of that frozen ammonia."

"Growing?"

Chuck nodded positively. "Growing."

"What kind of stuff?"

"Grass," said Chuck. "Red grass."

Engar stared at him. "Red?"

"Like this here." A blade of grass lay in Chuck's big palm. It was wide and coarse, and it was red. Engar took it thoughtfully. "I don't understand," he said. "The chlorophyl reaction—"

"Me neither," said Chuck. "My business is running the shovels. Just thought you'd like to know."

"I'm very much interested," said Engar studying the blade of grass. "Thanks for bringing it in. If there are any further developments, I'd be pleased to hear about them."

Chuck was on his way to the lockers with his bubble under his arm. "I'll let you know, Mr. Jarvin."

ENGAR NODDED. He was already absorbed in the blade. He took it to a microscope and found out it was exactly like any other grass-blade, except that it was red. Of course there were many plants on Earth that turned red in the fall. He glanced at the thermometer: It showed three hundred and sixty-one below. *Not exactly Indian summer*, he thought wryly. Anyway, this stuff was just starting to grow, and it was growing out of frozen ammonia. He laid the leaf on the porcelain bench. It seemed to turn darker; it began to curl. Suddenly it ignited and went up in a puff of flame.

Engar nodded. Entirely to be expected.

He drew the tape log toward him, but a crisp voice came from behind. "Mr. Jarvin, you are not a botanist, are you?"

He turned to Corinne Madison. "No, I am not," he said.

"I am," she said. "Botany was my minor. Furthermore, I do not like things going on behind my back."

"I only—"

She held out a very small white hand. "The blade of grass, please."

He bit his lower lip rather softly. "I am afraid it is too late."

Her hand dropped to her side. Her eyes flashed. "Why is it too late, Mr. Jarvin?" He pointed to the bench and the tiny pile of ashes.

She drew herself up. "This is rank insubordination, Mr. Jarvin."

"You would hardly expect a leaf that survived outside, there, to retain its composition under what must—to it—be a pretty hot fire. Remember, there is a difference of anywhere up to five hundred degrees."

"No," she said, "I would not expect it; nor would I expect red grass to grow out of frozen ammonia."

Engar looked down. "It's a strange planet, Miss, and we know very little—"

"I think you've told me that before. I do not want to have trouble with you, Mr. Jarvin. The next time something like this occurs, I expect to be notified before—not after—the cremation."

He didn't answer. It was not a situation that lent itself to an answer. If she had not had such white skin and such black hair—he sighed. But he thought probably he did have a limit, and he wondered if Miss Madison was not pushing him toward it...*

Two days later Chuck Delbert was in again, a frown between his eyes. "That red grass," he said, lifting the bubble over his head, "is getting thicker. The whole plain outside is covered with it."

"In which direction, Chuck?"

"All directions. I took the ice-sled and made a run around the dome. There's a regular field of it."

"Can you tell how far it reaches from the dome?"

"A long ways—beyond the search-lights, anyway."

"It may be a sort of seasonal thing," said Engar.

"It wasn't here last year."

"Well, no...but seasons may be quite different on Uranus. It takes this planet eighty-four of our years to go around the Sun, so the seasons might be much longer."

"Yeah, maybe. It's funny," said Chuck. "The grass seems to be sort of closing in on the dome."

"That might be your imagination."

"Not me," said Chuck; "my teachers always said I never had no imagination a-tall."

THAT EVENING, when the columns were quiet for a while, Engar got up in the observation post in the top of the dome and turned on the big searchlight. He probed the Uranian darkness in all directions. Everywhere it was the same—a frozen white plain, level and vast. Except for one thing: the red grass, that looked black in the light, was within two hundred yards on all sides.

It startled Engar; he didn't quite know what to make of it. The red grass was almost like an advancing army. Miss Madison's voice, in his ear, startled him more. "I hope there is a good reason for this juvenile playing with the searchlight. Mr. Jarvin."

He looked down at her. At first he was annoyed. But the tiny space at the top of the dome necessitated their being quite close together, and he overlooked his annoyance. "It is not necessary constantly to assert your authority with me, Miss Madison," he said gently, and pointed at the fringe of red grass. "I don't like it," he said.

She stared, swung the small telescope into position and focused it. Finally

she announced, "It *does* seem to be red grass, Mr. Jarvin, but is that anything to get excited about? After all, you've said yourself it's a strange planet."

He smiled. "Those were my exact words, I believe. However"—he turned sober—"there is the business of the little green man."

"The little what!"

He rubbed his chin with the back of his wrist, frowning in the direction of the searchlight's beam. "I don't ask you to believe this, Miss Madison; it's fantastic."

"I am becoming used to fantasy," she told him.

"This little man with the pink eyebrows and peacock-feather tail—"

"An utterly horrid combination, Mr. Jarvin." She suppressed a half-smile. "Could it be that your imagination is playing tricks on you?"

He looked at her and took a deep breath. "Perhaps you are right; I'll keep it to myself."

"You have aroused my curiosity. Do continue, please."

"He started appearing soon after we landed here with the first shipload of supplies, and he usually shows up about once a week."

"Coming from where—the great frozen outside?" she asked gaily.

"I don't know; he said he was a Uranian."

"I notice you speak Uranian with a slight accent, Mr. Jarvin."

His eyes narrowed. "If you are trying to provoke me," he said, "you are closer to success than you might believe."

She smiled archly. "What would you do, Mr. Jarvin, if I provoked you?"

"That's hard to answer; I can't seem to recall a comparable situation."

"Do you mean you've never been provoked?"

He answered cautiously, "Not enough to do anything—desperate, at least not since I was a kid."

She led the way down the ladder. She was wearing a white nylon blouse, and her shoulders looked very nice in

it. "Now tell me more about the little green man, Mr. Jarvin."

"He was here about a week ago and demanded that we abandon the station," Engar said. "I told him it wouldn't be done without authority from Earth. He demanded that I send a message asking that authority." Engar looked down at Corinne. "Then you stormed in, and I decided it was best not to mention it just then." He stopped, looking away.

"And—" she prompted.

"He appeared again and said he would have to take steps, or something to that effect."

She studied him as if trying to decide whether to believe him. Then she looked at the plastic walls of the dome. "I doubt," she said, "that the red grass has any power to harm our station." . . .

BUT A FEW days later the red grass was growing out of the frozen ammonia at the very edge of the plastic dome. "The thing I do not understand," said Miss Madison, "is where it gets energy for growth."

Engar took a step toward her. She was very lovable when she wasn't trying to assert authority. But at that moment he heard the whistle of the air-chamber, and a few moments later Chuck Delbert appeared. His forehead was wrinkled with trying to understand something that was beyond him. "There's plants growing out there, now, Mr. Jarvin—red plants."

"Red plants?" asked Corinne.

"Yes, ma'am. They seem to be growing toward the dome. A quarter of a mile away they are just breaking through the ground; but at the limits of the searchlight they look as high as a man. They have big, droopy leaves, and there seems to be a kind of golden glow comes from the middle somewhere."

Engar remembered the being's eyes. "A glow," he said thoughtfully.

Within another week, they could pick up the strange plants in the searchlight from the observation tower. It was about time for a new series of draw-

offs from the ion-exchange columns, but Engar took time out to study the plants with Corinne. "They're coming closer," he told her.

She began to look worried. "What can we do?"

"Nothing right now," he said.

The plants came closer. They began, one might say, to burst into bloom. As they matured, they emanated that golden glow from the top, and the Earthpeople soon found that they were not able to watch it closely. The brilliance was unendurable.

Then came the day when Chuck Delbert's men started out, took a turn in the four-hundred-below temperature, and came clattering back with their big mechanical shovels.

Corinne met Chuck at the airlock. "Why are you back?"

Chuck set a small black box on the table. "Look at that counter, Miss Madison; our contract specifically states that we are not to work in radiation like that."

She glanced at the paper chart, and frowned at the extreme height of the recording line. "Why, this is more than an immunized person can stand; this is up to ten roentgens a day."

"That's what I'm sayin', Miss."

"Very well," she said. "You may take the day off."

Engar looked at the chart over her shoulder. "Where's it coming from?" he wondered.

She looked outside. "From the plants, I suppose; that golden glow may be the signal of some sort of nuclear action."

Engar was watching No. 8 column with one eye.

"You'd better take care of your draw-off, Mr. Jarvin. I'll see if I can work out the answer to this."

He nodded, moving toward the button. The peach-colored band didn't look right to him. Vaguely he heard through the open door to the director's office, the soft shuttling and clicking of the calculator, than an exclamation of exasperation from Miss Madison. But he did not have time to investigate.

The calculator was giving her trouble again, but he had to watch the color-bands on No. 8.

The peach-colored band turned unexpectedly to a sort of gray-brown. Engar frowned and shook his head.

He got out his own counter. The gamma discharge was rising toward the danger-zone; the neutron line was beginning to go up. He went to Miss Madison's office. She was not there. The black box was still on her desk. She had been trying to operate the calculator, but a forest of tiny red lights indicated that it was completely out of adjustment.

He looked around. The door to her personal locker was open, and her space-suit was gone. He ran out. The big pumps were thumping, and the gauge on the compression-chamber showed a build-up that would keep out the deadly methane when the outer door was opened. Engar pounded on the wall. "Don't do that!" he shouted.

Of course she couldn't hear him. He ran to his locker and got into his suit and put on the bubble. He saw that the heating-unit was working. By that time the airlock was empty; he closed it and stepped inside and started the pumps.

A MOMENT later he was outside. He saw her in the glow from his breast-lamp, leaning into the strong wind, walking toward the red plants. The frozen ammonia was slippery, but he hurried. The nearest sun-plant was two hundred yards away, and she was halfway there, a small, slender figure bending against the Uranian wind. He reached her, and put a hand on her arm. "Come back," he said.

She pulled away and looked at him through the bubble. Her voice in the suit-com sounded odd and a little frantic. "I've got to have a specimen of that plant."

He shook his head. "If you get close enough to touch one," he said, "the radioactive poisons will kill you."

He was standing between her and

the plants. She looked over his shoulder, then back at the dome, and seemed resigned. He relaxed, and at the same time she darted around him.

At that moment the dome's searchlights came on and lighted up the entire area. There was the field of red plants growing out of the frozen white ammonia, and from each full-grown plant emanated that intense golden glow.

He ran after her, but she was quick on her feet. She was reaching toward a red leaf when he caught her. She tried to pull away, but this time he held her firmly. They slipped and slid on the ice, but he didn't turn loose. Finally she quit fighting, but she was so furious her face was white. He got them both into the airlock. He was puffing a little. He turned on the pumps.

When they walked out into the ion lab she faced him. "I don't suppose you would care to know why I went out there."

"Of course I would," he said, fascinated by her color.

"Those plants," she said, "those red plants must have a catalyst corresponding to chlorophyl."

"Chlorophyl turns sunlight into plant-energy—sugars and so on," he remembered.

"You get an A," she said sarcastically. "But out here on Uranus there is very little sunlight. The energy has to come from somewhere else—frozen ammonia—and the red color indicates a catalyst that enables the plant to turn ammonia into fission-energy."

"The little green man was right," Engar said sadly. "As soon as you find out how to do that, then Earth will start digging up Uranus' ammonia and hauling it away."

CHUCK DELBERT was coming down from the observation-tower; he looked at them curiously, and went across the lab into the mechanics' quarters.

Corinne began to storm again. "Is it necessary that you take such a nar-

row view? If that red catalyst will turn ammonia into nuclear energy, then it probably will provide a clue to the reverse-reaction—or to such things as turning nuclear energy directly into electrical energy or something else that we can use. With nuclear energy available, we could use sunlight. There must be some way to use radiant energy directly—and those plants hold the answer!"

"I'm sorry," he said. "You would not live more than a few days, if at all, after you touched one of those plants. Even if the nuclear reaction is carried on by no more than a pin-point of matter, the radiation would be deadly—to say nothing of the heat."

Her tone changed unexpectedly. "You know," she said, "that these plants are coming closer and closer. It is only a question of a very short time until the radiation in the dome itself will be at a level which we cannot stand for more than a few hours. And what will be left for me then? You and I both will lose our positions and will be discredited. I want something to make up for it; a catalyst, such as those plants contain, would be the answer."

"I'm sorry," he said. "It's important to me, too—but neither one of us will be worth much dead."

"What about the sun-plants? We can't even stop them."

"Yes, I think we can." He went to the laboratory bench and looked in the cabinet beneath. "Yes, I think we can stop them. We *must* stop them if we want to live."

He spent the next half-hour up in the observation-tower. He called Chuck Delbert to help him. "Swing that searchlight around the dome in all directions," Engar said, "just as if you were spraying the plants out there."

"It doesn't make any light," said Chuck.

Engar nodded. "It makes a light all right—black light—infra-red. And I think you'll be able to follow its path. Now you start to work; mow down everything within reach—and

that should be about half a mile. I've got to go outside."

He was out of the dome when the sun-plants began to burst into flame. The long red leaves glowed with a blue fire that seemed to break out in a thousand places at once. The first plant went up in flames. There was a burst of intense light; the wind from the explosion almost knocked him over, and the heat was intense. There was an ascending orange-blue ball of fire, and then the familiar mushroom-shaped cloud—all on a very small scale compared to the nuclear explosions on Earth.

*

"It's lucky for us," Engar told Corinne when he came inside, "that there is no more than a pin-point of matter in each plant."

For now they sat side by side and watched through the window as the field of sun-plants went up in fire and smoke. It was like a gigantic display of fireworks, and Chuck Delbert was very thorough. In a few hours the radiation-levels had gone down. Corinne was once more able to use her calculator, and Engar set in motion a draw-off on No. 5.

IT WAS THEN the little green man appeared again. His golden eyes were dim now, as if he was exhausted, and his peacock-feather tail was drooping. "You played unfairly," he said in his bird-like voice. "There are too many of you for us. We are only five, and we used up all of our energy creating the field of sun-plants—which you destroyed in a few hours."

"I'm sorry," Engar said, "but we do have to live."

"Dubious," said the being. "Dubious."

"Oh!" said a feminine voice, and Corinne stood behind Engar. Engar could see her white nylon sleeve from the corner of his eye.

The other looked up, but he didn't disappear as Engar had feared he

might. He glanced at Corinne and back at Engar. "The female of the species, I take it."

Engar found Corinne's hand. "You are quite right," he said warmly.

The little green man sighed. "Once," he said, "we had females, too; but now there are only we five old men."

"I'm terribly sorry," said Corinne.

The little green man looked at her. His golden eyes began to glow. "You needn't be," he said. "I've already had a long life and a very good one. I was born, in fact, before you Earthpeople were even writing history."

"We'll try to see that your planet is not usurped," Corinne said gently.

"Don't. You can't fight evolutionary forces; you can't even fight the force that draws you two together."

Engar looked up at her. "Maybe he's right."

"Maybe."

Engar looked back. The little green man was gone. Engar got up. No. 5's drawoff was finished, and he re-set the warning signal

"There's just one thing," Corinne said. "If I could have saved some of those leaves before Mr. Delbert finished his extermination—"

Engar looked down at her. "Wouldn't the red grass do just as well?"

She brightened. "Why, yes—" Then her face fell. "But the red grass burned up with the plants."

"Not all of it," he told her. "You remember the grass approached the dome first?"

"Yes."

"I slipped outside," he told her, "and gathered a few handfuls of the grass while Chuck was getting the infra-red lamp in operation. It's stowed away in the airlock now."

She looked up at her, her dark eyes shining. "You darling!" she breathed.

Her nylon blouse rustled as she moved into his arms. He kissed her. There was no comparable situation that he could recall, but he kissed her anyway.



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TURN OF A CENTURY

We hope New Year's Eve, 1999, won't be like this — but it doesn't seem too unlikely the way things are going now . . .

By James Blish

(illustrated by Milton Luros)



ONLY A little after dusk, the fax reporters had gotten a bonfire going, which they kept hot and high with anything they could find in the snow-covered countryside around the hill. It was their job to cover the arrival of the 21st Century for the first edition—the pink sheet, it was called—of the facsimile newspapers, from the rather special point of view of the Church of Gifts Held Back. But since the turn of the century was unlikely to break unexpectedly, keeping warm had priority.

Inside an hour, however, the three ancient fence-rails upon which the fire had been started had burned through. Since nobody would volunteer to trudge back to the fence for more rails, the blaze died down considerably.

It was still bright enough, nevertheless, to show the near side of the wooden ark on the top of the hill. Occasionally, when the bitter wind shifted, singing voices could be heard from inside the toy-like ship. The fax reporters paid no attention; it was not yet late enough for Kingdom Come.

After the crap game on the tarpaulin had been running for a while, bottles got into circulation. This pro-

voked a few quarrels among the crapshooters, but everyone was too cold to be seriously interested in fighting. It all blew over at once when one of the younger reporters appeared out of the snow-floored darkness with two chickens, which were plucked and dismembered promptly, if inexpertly.

The video cameramen had been avoiding the fire up to now, since it fogged their shots. Some of them had actually gone around to the other side of the hill to shoot the little boat on the hilltop in silhouette against the glare. But when the smell of the chicken began to spread, they began to come in by ones and twos, though it was clearly impossible to make only two chickens serve so many.

"Why not throw them into the pot?" an older reporter suggested.

"What do you think this is, a soup-kitchen? Let the damn ike-pushers scrounge their own chickens, like I did."

"No, junior. I mean use 'em for stakes in the crap game. Parts of 'em, anyhow."

"That's an idea," said one of the crap-shooters, straightening his back painfully.

"Go to hell," said one of the problem cooks. "I'll hang on to mine. The money's no good, anyhow. Next year we'll be wrapping butts in it, the way pliofilm's disappearing now."

"I'll rap your butt if you burn that



They talked about the "Ark".

wing," said the young reporter. "Anyhow, maybe next year will be different. I got a feeling. 1999 is just another damn year, but it seems like the year 2000's *got* to be something special."

There was a whistling drone overhead, and the entire snow-spread farm turned glaring white and shadowless. The parachute-flare took a long time to burn out—long enough for the video men to race back to their ikes and send home several good, clear shots of the ark.

The light was bright enough to show up cabalistic symbols which had been painted along her sides in many colors, and even to pick up the curl of smoke which was coming out of the stack atop her deckhouse. No people were visible to any of the cameras, but one shot did show the head of a mongrel dog—eyes squinted, ears flattened—thrust tentatively through one of the four below-deck portholes.

"It'll be special—like that," the older reporter said, jerking his head skyward at the dwindling glare. "Only the next time you see a light like that, you won't be making conversation about it afterwards. You'll be *gash*."

The young man looked glum dutifully. "Yeah," he said. "Why don't those bastards in Washington get the lead out of their pants and hell-bomb Buenos Aires? Why are we just sitting around waiting for *them* to hit *us* first?"

"That's not up to you and me, sonny. You wouldn't want the boys in Washington to start anything before they've got the place drunk dry, would you? Here, pass me one of those while you're at it."

"I still think maybe Joe Stalin had the right idea," the young man said doggedly. "We should have kept out of the last fracas and let the Com- mites mop up Perón and Franco for us. They were on to those birds before we were."

"All these damn bushes," one of the ike men grumbled. "And not one single blonde to roll in 'em. A hell of a place to spend New Year's. Wonder what it's like on Times Square now?"

THE OLDER reporter shrugged. "It's full of people, and the people are all watching the video screen on the Times Building, waiting to see what happens to the fruitcakes up on top of that hill. You aren't sending 'em much to look at."

"Nothing-to-look-at is just what we're here to send 'em. If there were

really going to be something to see, this place'd be crawling with ike-cables all the way back to Dubuque.

"The hell it would. You'd all of you be hiding under the tables at Jimmy's, hoping the Lord would overlook you in the confusion."

"Have it your way, pop."

There was a renewed burst of singing up on the hill, and a powerful voice could be heard shouting indistinguishable words. In the middle of the second verse, a cow mooed disgustedly. There were quite a few animals in the salvation-boat.

"You don't catch me hiding under no table," the younger man said, putting the bottle back down. "Hell-bomb or the end of the world it's all the same to me. I'm as good as the next guy, and I don't care who knows it. What I say is, are you a man, or a mouse?"

"He means souse," one of the fax men said, fishing the dice out of the snow, and shooting a glance sidewise at the older man. "Hey. I thought I recognized you. Aren't you the guy that broke the story on the jet-polo fixes? What the hell are you doing out here? Your ought to be rolling in dough."

"I got caught while I was still rolling," the older man said, growling. "What's it to you? I'll tell you something else, too, nosey. Those college punks are all out on parole now. Full sob-sister treatment; every last one of 'em. And this is where they put me—and for what? For nothing, that's what."

"Tough," said the crap-shooter.

"I don't care, for myself," the older man said. "What kills me is letting

those punks get away with it. One year in the clink—what's that in a kid's life? They should of clapped the whole damn batch of 'em in the infantry. That'd've straightened 'em out. I was a top-kick in the last one. If they'd've been in my outfit—"

One of the ike-men rose, throwing a devastated drumstick into the fire. "Quarter of twelve," he said.

Everyone got up; some stiffly; none in a hurry. In the distance the drone could be heard, very softly, on its way back.

"Well, I'll be damn glad when it's over," the older reporter said to nobody. The younger man, his head wobbling, tagged him.

"It's going to be kind of rough for the guys up on the hill, too," he said. "I mean—you'd think that going through a thing like this would be pretty bad."

"Why would it?"

"Well, try to put yourself in their places. They'll be all set to be towed to heaven, at twelve sharp. All the rest of us are supposed to drown, or burn, or something. When nothing happens, it'll be a shock. You'd think it'd be hard on them: either drive 'em completely batty, or else bring 'em to their senses."

"It won't do either one, though. I've seen their kind before."

The droning shot over the hill and banked back for another, closer pass. The older man stumbled over an unseen stone and swore.

"It won't change 'em a bit. Why the hell doesn't he drop that flare? They never change, sonny; they never change."



Remembered Words

Starting next issue, this space will announce the names of those readers whose letters have been voted as "best", and who will receive originals of their choice from this issue. Everyone is invited to vote, so send in your ballot!

THE POSSESSED

The Swarm kept its rendezvous, but the reason for it had long been forgotten . . .

by Arthur C. Clarke

(illustrated by H. W. Kiemle)



AND NOW the sun ahead was so close that the hurricane of radiation was forcing the Swarm back into the dark night of space. Soon it would be able to come no closer: the gales of light on which it rode from star to star could not be faced so near their source. Unless it encountered a planet very soon, and could fall down into the peace and safety of its shadow, this sun must be abandoned as had so many before.

Six cold outer worlds had already been searched and discarded. Either they were frozen beyond all hope of organic life, or else they harboured entities of types that were useless to the Swarm. If it was to survive, it must find hosts not too unlike those it has left on its doomed and distant home. Millions of

years ago, the Swarm had begun its journey, swept starwards by the fires of its own exploding sun. Yet, even now, the memory of its lost birthplace was still sharp and clear, an ache that would never die.

There was a planet ahead, swinging its cone of darkness through the flame-swept night. The senses that the Swarm had developed upon its long journey reached out towards the approaching world, reached out and found it good.

The merciless buffetting of radiation ceased as the black disc of the planet eclipsed the sun. Falling freely under gravity, the Swarm dropped swiftly until it hit the outer fringe of the atmosphere. The first time it had made planetfall, it had almost met its doom; now it contracted its tenuous substance with the unthinking skill of long practice, until it formed a tiny, close-knit sphere. Slowly its velocity slackened, until at last it was floating motionless between earth and sky.

For many years it rode the winds of the stratosphere from Pole to Pole, or let the soundless fusillades of dawn blast it westwards from the rising sun. Everywhere it found life, but nowhere intelligence. There were things that crawled and flew and leapt, but there were no things that talked or built. Ten million years hence there might be creatures here with minds that the Swarm could possess, and guide for its own purposes: there was no sign of them now. It could not guess which of the countless life-forms on this planet would be heir to the future, and without such a host it was helpless—a mere pattern of electric charges, a matrix of order and self-awareness in a universe of chaos. By its own resources, the Swarm had no control over matter; yet once it had lodged in the mind of a sentient race there was nothing that lay beyond its powers.

It was not the first time, and it would not be the last, that the planet had been surveyed by a visitant from space—though never by one in such

peculiar and urgent need. The Swarm was faced with a tormenting dilemma. It could begin its weary travels once more, hoping that—ultimately—it might find the conditions it sought; or it could wait here on this world, biding its time until a race had arisen which would fit its purpose.

It moved like mist through the shadows, letting the vagrant winds take it where they willed. The clumsy, ill-formed reptiles of this young world never saw its passing, but it observed them, recording, analysing, trying to extrapolate into the future. There was so little to chose between all these creatures: not one showed even the first faint glimmerings of conscious mind. Yet if it left this world in search of another, it might roam the Universe in vain until the end of time.

At last it made its decision. By its very nature, it could chose both alternatives. The greater part of the Swarm would continue its travels among the stars, but a portion of it would remain on this world, like a seed planted in the hope of future harvest.

It began to spin upon its axis, its tenuous body flattening into a disc. Now it was wavering at the frontiers of visibility—it was a pale ghost, a faint will-of-the-wisp that suddenly fissured into two unequal fragments. The spinning slowly died away: the Swarm had become two, each an entity with all the memories of the original—and all its desires and needs.

There was a last exchange of thoughts between parent and child who were also identical twins. If all went well with them both, they would meet again in the far future here at this valley in the mountains. The one who was staying would return to this point at regular intervals down the ages: the one who continued the search would send home an emissary if ever a better world was found. And then they would be united again, no longer exiles vainly wandering among the indifferent stars.

THE LIGHT of dawn was spilling over the raw, new mountains when the parent swarm rose up to meet the sun. At the edge of the atmosphere, gales of radiation caught it and swept it unresisting out beyond the planets, to start again upon the endless search.

The one that was left began its almost equally-hopeless task. It needed an animal that was not so rare that disease or accident could make it extinct, nor so tiny that it could never acquire any power over the physical world. And it must breed rapidly, so that its evolution could be directed and controlled as swiftly as possible.

The search was long and the choice difficult, but at last the Swarm selected its host. Like rain sinking into thirsty soil, it entered the bodies of certain small lizards and began to direct their destiny.

It was an immense task, even for a being which could never know death. Generation after generation of the lizards was swept into the past before there came the slightest improvement in the race. And always, at the appointed time, the Swarm returned to its rendezvous among the mountains. Always it returned in vain: there was no messenger from the stars, bringing news of better fortune elsewhere.

The centuries lengthened into millenia; the millenia into aeons. By the standards of geological time, the lizards were now changing rapidly. Presently they were lizards no more—but warm-blooded fur-covered creatures that brought forth their young alive. They were still small and feeble, and their minds were rudimentary; but they contained the seeds of future greatness.

Yet not only the living creatures were altering as the ages slowly passed. Continents were being rent asunder, mountains being worn down by the weight of the unwearing rain. Through all these changes, the Swarm kept to its purpose: and always, at the appointed times, it went to the meeting-place that had been chosen

so long ago, waited patiently for a while, and came away. Perhaps the parent swarm was still searching, or perhaps—it was hard and terrible thought to grasp—some unknown fate had overtaken it, and it had gone the way of the race it had once ruled. There was nothing to do but to wait and see if the stubborn-life-stuff of this planet could be forced along the path to intelligence.

And so the aeons passed...

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Somewhere in the labyrinth of evolution the Swarm made its fatal mistake and took the wrong turning. A hundred-million years had gone since it came to Earth, and it was very weary. It could not die, but it could degenerate. The memories of its ancient home and of its destiny were fading: its intelligence was waning, even while its hosts climbed the long slope that would lead to self-awareness.

By a cosmic irony, in giving the impetus which would one day bring intelligence to this world, the Swarm had exhausted itself. It had reached the last stage of parasitism: no longer could it exist apart from its hosts; never again could it ride free above the world, driven by wind and sun. To make the pilgrimage to the ancient rendezvous, it must travel slowly and painfully in a thousand little bodies. Yet it continued the immemorial custom, driven on by the desire for reunion which burned all the more fiercely now that it knew the bitterness of failure. Only if the parent swarm returned and reabsorbed it, could it ever know new life and vigour.

The glaciers came and went: by a miracle the little beasts that now housed the waning alien intelligence escaped the clutching fingers of the ice. The oceans overwhelmed the land, and still the race survived. It multiplied, but it could do no more; this world would never be its heritage.

Far away, in the heart of another continent, a certain monkey had come down from the trees and was looking at the stars with the first glimmerings of curiosity.

The mind of the Swarm was dispersing, scattering among a million tiny bodies, no longer able to unite and assert its will. It had lost all cohesion: its memories were fading. In a million years, at most, they would all be gone.

Only one thing remained—the blind urge which still, at intervals which by some strange aberration were becoming ever shorter, drove it to seek its consummation in a valley that long ago had ceased to exist.

QUIETLY riding the lane of moonlight, the pleasure-steamer passed the island with its winking beacon and entered the fjord. It was a calm and lovely night, with Venus sinking in the west out beyond the Faroes, and the lights of the harbour reflected with scarcely a tremor in the still waters far ahead.

Niles and Christina were utterly content. Standing side by side against the boat-rail, their fingers locked together, they watched the wooded slopes drift silently by. The tall trees were motionless in the moonlight, their leaves unruffled by even the merest breath of wind, their slender trunks rising whitely from pools of shadow. The whole world was asleep: only the moving ship dared to break the spell that had bewitched the night.

Then, suddenly, Christina gave a little gasp and Niles felt her fingers tighten convulsively on his. He followed her gaze: she was staring across the water, looking towards the silent sentinels of the forest.

"What is it, darling?" he asked anxiously.

"Look!" she replied, in a whisper Niles could scarcely hear. "There—

under the pines!"

Nils stared, and as he did so the beauty of the night ebbed slowly away and ancestral terrors came crawling back from exile. For beneath the trees the land was alive, a dappled brown tide was moving down the slopes of the hill and merging into the dark waters. Here was an open patch on which the moonlight fell unbroken by shadow. It was changing even as he watched: the surface of the land seemed to be rippling downwards like a slow waterfall seeking union with the sea.

And then Nils laughed and the world was sane once more. Christina looked at him, puzzled but reassured.

"Don't you remember?" he chuckled. "We read all about it in the paper this morning. They do this every few years, and always at night. It's been going on for days."

He was teasing her, sweeping away the tension of the last few minutes. Christina looked back at him, and a slow smile lit up her face. "Of course!" she said. "How stupid of me!"

Then she turned once more towards the land and her expression became sad. "Poor little things!" she sighed. "I wonder why they do it?"

Nils shrugged his shoulders indifferently. "No one knows," he answered. "It's just one of those mysteries. I shouldn't think about it if it worries you. Look—we'll soon be in harbour!"

They turned towards the beckoning lights, where their future lay, and Christina glanced back only once towards the tragic, mindless tide that was still flowing beneath the moon.

Obeying an urge whose meaning they had never known, the doomed legions of the lemmings were finding oblivion beneath the waves.



THE SEVENTH WIND

There are times when it's best not to demand too much proof of reality . . .

by Charles Dye

(Illustrated by Milton Luros)



He'd crashed into a ruined stone wall, and ahead of him were two half-buried pillars of — a gateway!

HOPEFULLY, Reynolds raised his canteen to blistered lips, shaking it savagely for one last drop. It was empty—as dry and empty as the great Mephic desert. Flinging the canteen into a nearby

drift, Reynolds laughed until shiny black spots danced before him. His throat was almost too parched for laughter, but he heard it, rolling on and on, acid and endless as the stinging heat. What else could he do but

laugh—with death a few withering hours away?

It was difficult to think. His head was filled with tiny spears of light and darkness, which cut his thoughts to ribbons. Instinct told him it was better to meet death on the move; he plodded onward.

Many life-forms may have passed this way ages ago, but they all were gone now. Except for lichen-covered sea-bottoms, five eighths of the planet Mephis was arid waste, unrelieved from sterility by surface-moisture or cloud-covering, and glaring mercilessly under a brassy sun.

Nothing remained, but that lowly plant-life, the lichen; and the Itroo, a semi-intelligent reptilian mammal which managed to exist on the lichen for food, and what little moisture its bizarre metabolism needed.

Reynolds could still hear the Itroo's strange, hooting pigeon-English. "You soon ghost, hunt devil-city all time," they had hooted before curling into balls. "We not wait seven winds, bad devils!"

That had been three days ago.

Stumbling over the desert, only barely conscious, it seemed to Reynolds that he had been fighting this adversary since the beginning of time—and now it was about to conquer.

It had been an unfair fight from the start, with the greatest and hottest of the planet deserts eternally mocking with diabolical mirage-traps that lead him in circles. Over and over again, he had staggered towards mountains crowned with diadems of snow; glistening jungles greener than emeralds; lakes cooler than clearest sapphires; but always after a few steps the fading of the image—and, again, nothing but a world of light and heat. Then more jungles, and water, and snow-capped mountains, in front of him in back of him all around him—until he would fall down in an agony of confusion, only to be stung back on his feet again by the scorching sand.

But the mirage-filled desert would mislead him no more. Since sunrise, a sandstorm had been swirling in the Southeast, establishing a landmark by which he could plot his course.

"You soon ghost..." The irony of the Itroo's last remark kept seesawing through his brain. Yes, very soon now, his ghost would be searching for the City of Seven Winds—if this world of blazing light and heat didn't kill it, too.

Reynolds, a free-lance zoologist, had spent six months studying and establishing communication with the Itroo, who inhabited the lichen-covered sea-bottoms separating two wastelands. In spite of being alien primitives, whose consciousness was upset by any pure metallic presence, the Itroo possessed amazing linguistic ability. Eventually, he was piecing together half-coherent legends, telling of a time eons before Mephis had become the Mephis of now.

It was said to have been the home of a powerful race of apparently-humanoid magicians, who one day—upon foreseeing the fate of their planet—had built a gateway from their city into another world, escaping the terrible future of heat and sand which their magic, or science, was not great enough to subdue. Mephis had once been much like Earth.

The rage of seven wind-storms was needed to make the ruins rise from their sandy grave. At the end of the seventh storm, its sight might be traced; but there was no way of counting the winds.

Reynolds cursed the Itroo's peculiar allergy to metals, which had precluded his bringing any scientific instruments—even a compass. His sight-marker and canteens, discarded long ago, had been made of plastic, but of what use was that to him now?

The Itroo had taken him into the general vicinity of the city. However becoming so intrigued by this geological and geographical oddity, he had insisted they take him still further. An

tagonized at his demands, they had rolled away leaving him to face alone the icy nights and burning days.

THE NIGHTMARISH vista of reddish, iron-oxide stained desert, was now only a blur on Reynolds' vision. Except for occasional streaks of dirty sulphur, there was nothing to break the monotony of sky and sand.

His body had been burned raw by the torrid sun and chapped to dryness by the freezing nights. The slightest move, stretching his taut, dry, skin had been torment; now, however, he had passed that point to which Nature permits pain. It was amusing when memories of water and shade flashed before him—he knew positively that they never had existed nor ever could. Nothing existed, save heat and light—and sometimes torrid blackness which was either night or unconsciousness. Even then the heat persisted, as though the sun were burrowing underfoot.

Water, trees, coolness! What were they but the vagaries of delirium? There was not, and never had been, anything on the universe but the desert, and himself, since time began. It was idle to imagine that there were human beings—it was not true; he had ceased to believe. Perhaps that was death—the discovery that nothing existed save oneself in the midst of torture.

Had there been ever—the sand-storm? There was no sky now, nor horizon—only yellow light that might be flaming haze or the sun, expanded until it filled all his vision. He closed his eyes to keep the searing light from entering his brain—then opened them. Except for a few feet in front, he could see nothing but smoky yellow haze—the first stage of heat-blindness, he thought, which always came before death in the desert.

It wouldn't be so bad dying, if only it could be in shade, out of this brain-searing light. Long ago, he had ceased seeing mirages; the world was now

only a few feet of fiery sand and blinding heat.

How much longer he stumbled on, Reynolds had no idea; it might have been hours or minutes. The light seemed to be growing dimmer, but the heat was just as intense. The day was either drawing to a close, or his life was. Somehow, in this madness, he associated himself with the day and as with the waning day he would grow darker and darker, then be completely dark.

He stumbled and fell. The sun beating down on his back was like an immense weight. But he could still crawl. Reynolds wondered vaguely what the last stage of death would be? Blindness? He would probably never know.

Suddenly, there was an explosion in his brain! He had crashed into something. Pushing up the sun-helmet, he was surprised that he could still see a little. It was part of a ruined stone wall, and ahead of him were two half-buried pillars of a—gateway!

In spite of his agonized throat, he laughed so long and hard he thought he would never stop. What a joke the desert had played; that he should at last have found the City of Seven Winds, at the same time death was about to find him. The desert had timed it perfectly; he would arrive exactly at the end of the seventh wind, which had been the sandstorm. Now, at least, his ghost would not have to search; he had cheated the desert that much.

If he could only find shade, just a few shadows to lie in while he died. He strained his burning vision to the fading-point; everything was covered, or nearly buried, with sand.

Shifting his gaze, he stared at the fabled gateway. The pillars were of translucent gold-green stone, once carved; but whatever their pictures or inscriptions, the sands had long ago effaced them. Only wavering lines remained, writhing as if alive—like a rippling sound-graph of sardonic hu-

mor. The two columns looked strangely alien and out of place, amid the sand and brownish rubble. But it was casting shadows—cool, long, tantalizing shadows that gave him one last mighty purpose; to feel coolness and shadow just once more.

Twice he struggled to his feet, rubbery legs giving way each time. Somehow on the third try, his breath coming in short, stabbing gasps, he made it. The effort made him reel with dizziness; his vision blurred so, he could hardly see the portal a few yards away.

Slowly, as if in a nightmare, he swayed and staggered towards the ancient gateway, now just a shadowy blur on his darkening brain. His thoughts, like his breath, were coming in agonized dagger-jabs. To make—shadows—gateway...

After what seemed years, he touched one of the pillars. But something was wrong! It was strangely cool, unlike the fiery sand and sky. Lurching between colossal slabs, he struck something hard—and heard a sonorous clang of metal as though he had crashed against a gigantic gong. Its back-swing must have buffeted him off balance, for he felt himself falling.

He did not feel himself striking the sand; in midfall, icy lightning struck him, enveloped him, and crushed him. His heart surged, stopped, and ceased to be.

It was dark...

This was his mind's ultimate effort—a dream compensating for all that Reynolds had endured in reality.

FIT BEGAN with the agony withdrawing from him slowly and more slowly, as though drained by invisible hands. He was rigid, helpless, but at least not in pain.

The blindness was easing away. No longer was there the biting yellow of sun but a soft, dim dusk, grey and vibrant with traces of fugitive color.

There was a humming in his ears, neither the roar of blood nor the echo

of the gong, but the sound of wind and waves. Wind and waves, where before had been only burning sand! It could be nothing but a dream. It was pleasant; he hoped that it would last a long, long time.

Details sharpened before him as his eyes gained focus. He was lying flat on his back. The gentle greyness was the sky. He could see down the foreshortened contours of his body, past the angular shoulder, along the bony arm and clawlike hand to his feet.

He was lying on a timeworn pavement, where weeds grew between stones that had been tumbled and turned. Their leaves were of purest green, as bright as if carved from the light of the rainbow's green band—as if Spring herself lived like a dryad within them. Beyond were trees of the same green, so tall that they merged with the sky. They grew thickly together, and he could not see past them: as yet, he had no strength to turn his head.

Then, as if conjured from nowhere—and certainly conforming to the wayward pattern of dreams—there was a swirl of color and half a dozen men appeared before him. At least he supposed that they were men, or Mephistians; they might be angels or friends. Their human form was merely incidental.

They were inhumanly tall, inhumanly attenuated. Not bony nor gaunt nor thin, but well-muscled and streamlined beyond all conception—as though gravity itself had altered, else their exquisitely slender limbs and hipless torsos could never have supported the flaring chests and massive shoulders.

Their skins were porcelain white. Like flowers which seem to glow in the dusk, they gave the impression of phosphorescence, as if every cell were a tiny glowing lamp. There was no color to their sharply-chiseled mouths; their eyes were steely glints. Their hair was silver, chopped negligently short.

They were clad only in loose cloaks

fastened over one shoulder, and bright as flashes of prisms.

The right arms of five of them were slipped through the bands of what Reynolds saw were shields—great brazen ovals embellished with crystals. The sixth carried a bronze wheel, around whose spokes wound strands of silk, like a spider's web. Its hub was a huge knob of clouded glass.

The man in purple slipped his arm from his shield, handed the oval to another, and came to Reynolds' side. There was no effort in his movement, no gathering of himself for a leap, but in less than the blink of an eye he had traveled from there to here. Reynolds could feel only vaguely the fellow's hand on his heart and brow.

The man spoke to the others. Whatever his language might have been, Reynolds had not heard its like before. The voice was rich and melodious. As music speaks to men through emotion, more often than through the intellect, the meaning could be grasped—not by hearing, but by the heart; it could have been telepathy.

"He is near death, yet still lives. Summon Irys quickly!"

The man with the wheel swung it high overhead. From its hub a shaft of crimson light probed the sky. He spoke to the threads, and in rhythm with his words, the light quivered, translating sound into radiance.

He twisted the wheel's spokes and the light faded from a red to green. It flickered, and from the wheel's threads, as from a receiver, a voice fell. Reynolds recognized it—the soft, musical voice of the woman he had sought all through life, yet never found except in dreams.

"I hear and obey!"

REYNOLDS had been lonely, and here were people. He had longed for water and shade—and here they were too. His pain had stopped, even as he had asked. He could forecast the rest of this dream, providing he did not waken too soon to experience its entirety. Next would come healing and

bodily activity, then love with this girl of another world. And after that—they would go away together, perhaps to the threshold of stirring adventures, of the marvels which, for all his pursuits of them, life had not given him.

The man with the wheel snapped off its light and lowered it. "Jaron, Zadiel!" he cried. "Hasten to the gate! It may be that this stranger was not alone, and his companions have fallen by the way."

The men in green and blue winked out like blown flames. "Morryn, Shabru—back to the station for the Wing." They vanished.

He flicked from sight and reappeared beside the fellow attending Reynolds. He looked anxiously upward. "Irys—come speedily! We must save this man, the first from another world in thousands of years."

"I am here," the soft voice said, and in a twinkling of color, Irys blossomed within arm's reach of him. She looked down on Reynolds with a dove-cry of pity. If he could have groaned, he would have—both a sob of joy and disappointment. For she was indeed the woman of whom he had always dreamed!

She was far too lovely for anything but a dream, far too perfect for flesh and blood. Her body was as fragilely slim and idealized as the others', but not beyond the bounds of his desire. It was feminine and alluring, white as the snowy shift which robed her, but not the cold white of alabaster—instead, the luster of shell.

Her face—how well he knew it!—was oval, the chin daintily pointed, the large eyes oblique but unlike the men's steely ones; they were delicate Arabian blue. Her narrow little nose was a trifle long and aquiline, high-bred—haughty above the redeeming petal of her mouth, shaped not like lips at all, but more like a kiss transfigured. There were faint tints in lips, cheeks and streaming hair.

In one hand she held the goblet of an enormous lily; in the crook of the other arm lay a stalk of leaves like a

scepter. Neither lily nor leaves had been snapped from their stems but had been plucked by the roots.

The lily seemed moulded by the most modernistic of artisans from the mist of a young May moon. Its leaves were like magnified wings of dragonflies; the scepter cradled in the girl's bent arm was scale-stemmed and fin-leaved.

In a second, Reynolds had perceived all his. The plants were new to him, but not the girl; and he caught in her eyes a glimmer of what must be recognition.

A dream, a dream—nothing more! He despaired; if only he did not know that it was a dream! Where was its pleasure, when he realized that it was only the last flicker of his imagination? It was mockery, and almost—but not quiet yet—he wished it would end.

IRYS DROPPED on her knees beside him, smiling a smile he knew well. She lifted his head and touched the lily-flagon's rim to his lips. He could not open his mouth, but the long, languid fingers pried his lips gently apart.

He could not feel the liquid in his mouth, not for a very long while. All through that while he told himself, "In a moment it will stop—there'll be nothing but everlasting blackness."

Then he became afraid. Even if it were only a dream, even if he could foretell its pattern, it was better than nothing!

The men in blue and green flashed back into sight and reported to the one with the wheel. "He came by himself. There is only sand and storm beyond the gate." The wheel-master dismissed them. Then by some magic, they were gone in a sweep of shimmering cloaks. What else could this be but a dream?

A faint tingling rose in Reynolds' mouth and throat, and down into his chest. It was not an unpleasant sensation, as if his membranes were falling asleep. It grew, while repeatedly, Irys coaxed more of the liquid into him, and all through that time his eyes held

steadily to hers—for who knew at what instant he might awake and never see them again?

At last she drew back, satisfied; she tossed the lily lightly aloft. It hung, whirring its winglike leaves, then flitted away.

The man on whose knee Reynolds' head was pillowled, began unfastening Reynolds' shirt, plucking its tatters from chest and arms. The girl lifted the finny stalk and brushed it over the raw skin. Reynolds felt another prickling; it bored down like millions of tiny drills, seeking and merging with the inner tingling. His face, throat and breast seemed in ferment with light little bubbles.

The mummylike rigidity was displaced and crowded away. Once more, Reynolds was aware that he possessed muscles, and might use them. Healing had come, even as he had predicted; it angered, rather than pleased him.

If only he could break the pattern of the dream!

The man was turning him over, so that Irys might sweep the miraculous leaves over his back. He ought to perform that task himself; it was humiliating to be like an infant. The effort led not to his turning, however, but to an explosive flash of agony. Roaring darkness pounced down upon him and whirled him away.

The dream was ended!

"No! he cried, or tried to cry through that black whirlpool's tumult. "God, no—not yet! Let me have it again, if only for a little while!"

WHETHER it was his Maker's will, or his dying mind frantically prolonging the delusion—his eyes opened; the tingling faded. He sat up so easily that he gasped. Quickly he looked down the length of his healthy hue, without hint of rawness.

He threw himself forward to rise and snatch what happiness he could, in what little time might be left him.

Time! He laughed harshly, and at that laughter Irys and the others exchanged uneasy glances. There was no

time in this dusky dreamland—not for himself, at least. Well he knew that there are dreams spun in seconds which appear to consume years—and other dreams which pass so fleetingly that the conscious mind barely recalls them. Which brand of dream was this?

The purple-clad man helped him rise. Eager as Reynolds was to contrast his surroundings with what he knew to be the scheme of his dream, he did not turn to take them in. Now was the time for fulfillment! He sprang to Irys' side and caught her hand. It felt as cool and smooth as he had dreamed it would feel. She was startled, but did not draw away—and why should she? They knew each other well!

He swept his arms around her and sought her lips. She did not resist, but her kiss dulled the edge of his desire. It was exactly what he had expected; he sighed and thrust her away. She looked puzzled, as he had imagined she would. But how could he tell her his unhappiness? He knew beforehand how she would react.

If only somewhere he could find a flaw!

He scanned his surroundings. Before him the cracked, weed-riven pavement ended in an impenetrable jungle of brilliant trees. On his right was more of the verdure; but through it he could glimpse a great wall of gold-green stone, broken by the immense slabs of a gateway with doors of bronze. Directly before it was a great gong.

Behind him—he turned—the pavement dropped down on restless water a shade darker than the sky, tinted with evanescent surges of color, and rolling into the mists of distance. Up from it, strange and piebald islands thrust themselves, forked rocks of mountainous dimensions, like broken fragments of petrified trees more enormous than Sequoias. On their banks, flowers bloomed in leaping rainbow plumes like fountains of jewels; down their leaning sides fell torrents of leafy vines.

On the fourth side was a wide stair, twisting upward to infinite heights, the weeds thick along its buckled stones. Down it a yellow glimmer was gliding like the glow which came from the mythic Golden Fleece. It veered toward him so swiftly, that even while his eyes marked it and the figures riding it, the thing was at hand and settling lightly—a thirty-foot crescent like a quartermoon of brass, thick on the outward arc and thinning to a razor-edge on the inward one. In its center, a circular glass railing made a little well in which they stood, one holding a lever socketed in the floor.

"The Wing," the Martian with the wheel said to Reynolds, motioning for its riders to dismount. "Irys, bring him to the station—we go before." He signaled to the others and they dissolved into nothingness.

He, too, began fading from sight, then sharpened back into clarity. "Keep him not. Not only we, but the Holy Lords themselves will chafe until we hear his tale."

Then he was gone for good. Reynolds chuckled wryly. The dream was still just what he had wanted—now he was alone with Irys. Her name was about the only strange thing connected with her.

She misinterpreted his hesitancy. "Come, the Wing will carry us safely; you need not fear."

HE FOLLOWED her into the glassed enclosure. "I'm afraid, yes—but not in the way you're thinking. It's just that I feel like a child thrust into a world full of toys, with the admonition that he can play with any of them for less than an hour. He'd consume all the precious minutes torn by desire for every one of them, and take one only, to discard it for another, enjoying none."

She paused, her hand on the lever while he took his stance. "You think you dream," she said.

"Think it? I know it!"

"Did not your bruising of my lips convince you of my reality?"

He shook his head. "I've kissed you before; not once but hundreds of times."

She flinched a little away, vague terror in her eyes. "But this is—frightening!" She lowered her eyes; color crept into her smooth cheeks. "I too have met you—in a dream. And kissed—"

Then she stamped a foot angrily. "But this is preposterous! I am real!"

Her mouth set into a tight little line. Swiftly she struck him across the cheek, swept forth a slender foot and kicked him severely on the shin. "There—is not this real enough?"

He sighed. "It hurt, but even in dreams one can feel pain."

"Ah, you are stupid!" she cried pouting as often he had seen her do. She pulled the lever. The crescent lifted, skimmed the pavement, swerved and soared up the ruined stair. Save for the rush of damp wind, there was no feeling of motion.

"But what else would you expect?" she asked, vague puzzlement in her eyes.

"That's just it! I want something I'd never expect! I want to be taken by surprise—"

She was frowning. "But what is reality? You see me, hear me, touch me and breathe the perfume I wear. Surely you cannot doubt your senses; to do so is to court madness."

"There are such things as hallucinations," he answered, "caused by a derangement of the faculties. You'd better find a more choice definition of reality than that."

She said nothing, but there was a hurt look in her eyes.

The crescent had surmounted the stair and was skittering between the titanic columns of trees. Overhead tremendous flowers hung down like colossal bells, like baroque chandeliers, like acre-wide canopies. Everywhere was the flutter and flash of winged things, not always birds and butterflies. Birds, insects, unnameable things—all of them metal-winged, jewel-feathered, flame-furred

"Fit company for a lonely man who searched for beauty all his life," he said wryly.

Through a rift among the green pillars a crag was visible, jutting out over the sea like the broken end of a vast bridge. On its dome, turrets clustered like a castle from a fairy tale.

"It is the watch-station," Irys said. "There we dwell who guard the gateway between your world and mine. There we await the summons of the gong. But perhaps you already know!" "If I had stopped to think, I would have guessed it."

With a twirl to her lips, she drew on the lever. The crescent veered back into the forest vastness.

Now they were sweeping down the long wide stair.

"Have you foreseen this—our turning back?" she asked. Her voice lifted triumphantly: "Or do you admit that here is reality?"

"There's only one way by which I can judge. Take me back to the door; let me step out again into the desert. If it's real, then I'm alive and not dreaming."

She whimpered with rage. "So you have divined even that which I intended! Yes, better that you step outside," she whispered, shivering. "Your madness is infectious; almost I begin to believe that I am what you think me—a dream—"

The crescent was now over the pavement, lowering gently upon it near the gong. "There is the gate," she said. "Open it; peep out. Then you will know."

He gazed uneasily at the ponderous bronze leaves. Now was the decisive moment.

"Irys—" he whispered, turning to hold her very close. Her nearness was something he had felt too often—perhaps that was what decided him.

HE SPRANG over the curve of glass, marched up to the portal. The doors, for all their great size and thickness, swung with ease. Heat

rolled against him as though he had opened an oven. Harsh, yellow glare blinded him. He was glad of them—they were real enough. Encountering them again was as though he had never left them. He bent and caught up a handful of sand, let it sift between his fingers. It was hot as molten metal.

"You have seen!" Irys called tremulously. "Now you know! Close the gates and come back!"

He gestured for her to be patient. It was imperative that he step out into the inferno and suffer its tortures for just a moment more; then there could never be doubt. Also he was curious for a look at the gateway from the outside—he was interested in how Irys' widespread world could be encompassed between the two pillars.

A gust of hot wind lashed him with stinging sand as if warning him back, but he ventured unheeding out into the blaze. It hurt, but he did not care—he had not been dreaming after all! It was true, true!

A hundred yards from the monoliths he turned to inspect them; they were nothing but two ancient slabs in the midst of endless desert. He could see no trace of the heavy doors.

Some premonition gripped him then, and he started back toward the gateway. The wind was rising; sand hissed in clouds at his feet, snapping like the jaws of a trap.

Perhaps Irys' world was reached through another dimension; perhaps its matter existed in another scale of vibration than his own? He had heard physicists discussing the possibility of parallel worlds.

Never mind, he told himself; he could learn all of that and more, once he was back in the dusky land.

The horizon was blurring away under rising yellow haze—the hiss of sand growing louder, into a scream. The gale caught him and hurled him yards astray. Another sandstorm was tumbling down on the City of Winds.

He could barely glimpse the standing stones between the billowing

curtains of dust. An abrupt gust hid them entirely; he struck out toward where he had seen them, but the wind spun him off his feet. Not only the wind but the thickening pain—which a moment before had been so welcome—destroyed all sense of direction.

"Irys!" he called into the shrieking storm. "Call me so that I can find my way!"

Perhaps she answered; perhaps not. There were women's voices in the storm, but whether one of them were hers, he did not know. He was driven up a steep dune, and pitching over its opposite slope, fell rolling with sand in his cursing mouth.

There was no use now in seeking the gateway. He might only wander farther afield. He lay still, the driving sand blinding and choking him, the heat seeping into him as if he were clay in a kiln.

ALL THROUGH the storm he lay strangled and coughing, his skin drying to scales, his face hidden in the crook of his arm. When the wind had passed away—how many hours or years later he did not know—he wriggled from the drift and toiled to the top of the dune. Of red desert it commanded miles of view—but nothing more.

He wished that he had plucked one of those strangley-green weeds. He had brought back no proofs from the twilight-country, and now there was no gateway. Either there had never been one, or the sands had shrouded it again—and if the legend held true, another seven storms must rise to sweep away the sands!

The sun was still high, the heat worse than ever. There was no help; no relief in sight; not even a shimmering mirage,

Reynolds threw himself face-downward on the sand. Let it burn—let it kill him! Perhaps, he thought, when he died, he would dream again.



WORLD OF ICE

by Albert Hernhuter

(Illustrated by H. W. Kiemle)

Behind the thought, behind the helping hand, behind the generous gift, lies the vision of profit . . .

A DYNAMIC
"FIRST"

THE WIND blows and picks up the snow, carrying it and throwing it down like a lover, disgusted with his mate. The wind is like a sculptor and forms the snow into grotesque statues. And the statues stand for only a few moments—until the wind tears them down and scatters the snow into drifts and valleys; then the wind departs, leaving the snow in the patterns last used.

The sun makes his entrance from behind a curtain of clouds; his warmth melting the snow into rivers and streams. But they do not go very far, for the eternal cold freezes the water in front into dams that stop the rest of the water; and the water, piling up, freezes and stops. The winds begin again and the curtains are drawn on the sun. The snow is blown again over the shiny and treacherous crust—treacherous because it gives one the impression that he can walk in safety over the snow, for it is thick and strong in places. But in other places it is thin and weak. It is thin over the places where the perpetual streams flow—the streams that even the cold cannot stop, for their source is the giant field of ice and snow farther north. The streams that speed on their journey from nowhere to nowhere.

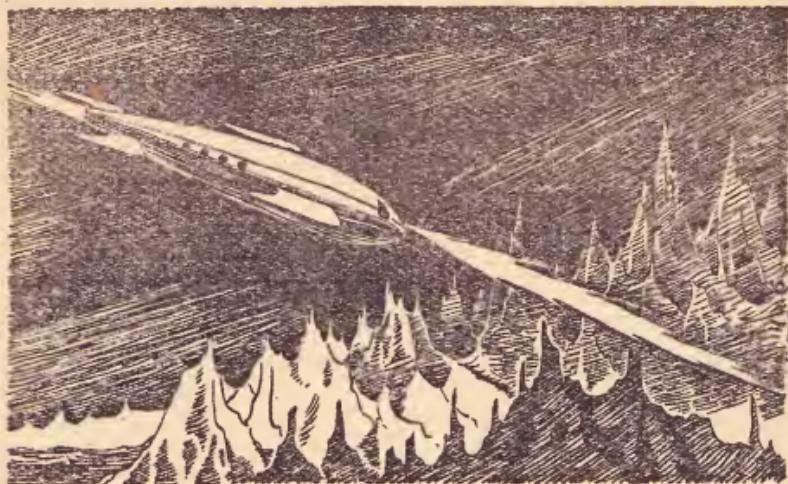
A small furry creature hops on his journey to someplace that only he knows. In his journey, he approaches a thin spot in the crust, under which

the streams wait for him. In one leap he is on the thin crust and through it. The look on his face is only one of puzzlement as the cold water takes him to its bosom, chilling him and drowning him. And then his body is solid, and is only another piece of ice, going with the waters.

The rocket craft approaches the planet, and the pilot sees the solid white sphere ahead of him. He presses a button on the control-panel and holds it down, while the clock ticks off ten seconds; then he releases it and leaves the room. For Man has conquered space long ago, but the take-offs and landings are still beyond him, and machines have to do the work. Perhaps, someday in the future, when homo superior is at his peak, Man will be capable—both mentally and physically—of withstanding the shock and responsibilities of lifting and lowering the behemoths of space.

In another room, the pilot—dresses in a rubberized crash suit—lowers himself into a vat of thick liquid. For even machines are not perfect; thus, if the ship crashes, the shock will be absorbed by the liquid. And while the pilot waits for rescue, he can eat the fluid, for it is quite nutritious.

In the now-empty control-room, there is a clicking sound to no one in particular, as the machinery for



The ship spits at the planet, sticks out a tongue of fire.

landing is started. The ship throbs as the engines begin. And in the view screen, the planet grows larger; but no one is watching the screen.

THE PLANET sees the craft approaching and is angry at the intruder. The winds rise to a new fury, whipping and beating the snow at the ship. And the ship answers; it spits at the planet, sticks out a tongue of fire, and the fire melts the snow around the ship. The melted snow reforms into hail that beats in a tattoo on the ship, like an angry drummer. The ship ignores the attack, and comes still closer to the frozen surface of the planet.

When the ship is very close, the blast of fire still melts the snow, and it has no time to form into hail; instead, it falls as rain. And rain caresses the surface of the planet—rain that the planet has not seen for eons. But the rain is assimilated into the snows as a sheet of ice, and the gleaming ice stares at the approaching ship like a malignant eye—until the tongue of fire, elated by its former victories, caresses it. And it shrinks away from the fire and is blinded by the brightness.

Then the ship lands and the tongue is taken back into the ship. It is quiet, and the winds try to blow the snows onto the ship and bury it. But the hull of the ship is heated and the snow cannot stay; it forms pools of water and then ice around the ship. But it does not—cannot—touch the ship. And soon the winds cease.



The control room is quiet now, and the only sound in the entire ship is a whirring sound in the crash-room as a metal arm—an extension of the machinery hidden in the walls of the ship—fishes around in the liquid until it finds the body of the pilot, and pulls him out. It holds him, dripping, above the vat while another arm snakes out and locates the zipper on the suit. A magnet attaches itself to the zipper and opens the suit; one arm holds the still dripping suit above the vat, while the other carries the pilot to the floor. He leaves the room, confident that, when the suit is dry, it will be hung in its spot on the wall.

In the control-room, the pilot checks the instruments from force of

habit. As usual, everything has been taken care of; he smiles, presses a series of buttons, and pulls a lever. In another part of the ship, a metal arm sorts through a pile of cloth, and picks the suitable materials for the pilot's clothing. It sews them together incredibly fast, and soon it is done; the suit is transferred to a metal rod that transports it to the front of the ship to the pilot.

For it has long since been decided that to carry all of the possible types of clothing, for the multitude of situations that might be encountered, would be impossible. So each ship carries a supply of cloth and an automatic sewing unit, that can prepare the proper clothing when needed; when the wearer is through with them, the clothes are taken apart, and the cloth returned to the rest of the pile. During the journey itself, no clothing is needed, for the temperature in the ship is constant; in fact, the only clothing carried is the rubberized crash-suit, and the immense space-suit.

IN THE control room a panel slides aside, and the suit is handed to the pilot, who puts it on. It is a rubberized suit that can withstand the cold on the planet while the pilot is outside. He was unconscious of the machinery that has prepared it; he takes it for granted that, when clothing is required, he need only push a few buttons. Putting on his helmet, he smoothes the rubber joint to make one seamless suit.

Now dressed, he steps into the air-lock and closes the inner door. He moves in front of a full-length mirror and checks his costume. Seeing that all is well, he opens the outer door and steps out onto the alien terrain.

The pilot walks a few yards from the ship across the ice; and the sound of the ice crushing is loud and crisp. Then he turns towards the ship and presses a button on his thick belt.

A humming sound appears in the helmet, and he nods his head in approval. He turns slowly, and the hum becomes softer; when he has turned from the ship, the sound ceases entirely. The sound is caused by the directional beam that keeps him from losing his way on the strange planet. Pressing another button, he begins to walk.

Back in the ship, the twin spools of a tape recorder spin, taking down every word that the pilot speaks. He has been trained to describe the topography of alien planets in such a way that, from his description, a committee can later tell if it would be worthwhile to send a larger exploring party—or perhaps colonists. And maybe someday the entire planet will be covered with descendants of the spawn that crawled from the seas on Earth long ago. And the spools spin on.

The pilot walks on through the snows, speaking a few, well-chosen words from time to time, and lapsing into silence for long moments. Suddenly his attention is attracted by a movement a few yards away. He reports the movement to the recorder, and follows it.

The object of his attention is a small, furry creature, similar to a terrestrial rabbit. As he moves closer, it moves away from him and stops—teasing him, and causing him to follow at a faster pace.

He has followed it for about a mile, when it disappears. He runs to the spot where he has last seen it, and in his haste fails to notice the crack in the snow. His feet crash through the thin crust, and before he could stop himself, he is in the flowing waters of one of the underground streams. The humming sound in his helmet keeps changing in tone as his body is carried, constantly turning, farther from the ship.

HE REMAINS calm, however, the hum reassuring him that when he comes to the surface, he will be

able to find his way back to the ship. After a while, however, he notices—from the increased scraping of his body against the sides of the cavern—that the stream is beginning to flow faster. He keeps his mind busy, trying to figure out what is causing the increase. And then, without warning, he finds out.

His body is flung out into space as the stream flows off its level, and into a hole. He falls, counting the long seconds, until he finally gives up. His mind turns to other things, and he thinks of a story he once read. One of its lines fit this situation quite well.

"Well! Alice thought, "After such a fall as this, I shall think nothing of tumbling downstairs!"

Before he can think of the rest of the story, however, he reaches the end of his journey, and the fall knocks him unconscious. His body, hitting the pool at the bottom of the waterfall, caused the water to splash wildly in all directions; the drops freeze on the sides of the pit, the phosphorescence of the rocks causing them to sparkle with the brilliance of a thousand jewels. He floats to the side of the pool; there his limp body remains unattended—but not for long.

One of the rabbit-like creatures sees his body floating and runs from the pool—to return in a few moments, followed by several of his companions. They tug at the pilot's body until it is out of the water, then drag it toward a clump of rude buildings. Once there, they put his body down and gather around it. After a short time, they fall asleep, a lumpy fur rug around the body of the pilot.

The pilot awakes with a buzzing sound in his ears, thinking for a moment that he is back in his ship, and that the sound is the alarm clock. Then he opens his eyes and sees the roof of the cavern far above his head; the shock of realization wakes him fully. He leaps to his feet, scattering the creatures grouped about

him, like Gulliver in Lilliput. The buzzing sound, he realizes, is caused by the directional-finder in his helmet. Its sound reassures him that, if he ever reaches the surface, he will not be lost.

While he ponders his situation, one of the animals crawls over to him and nudges his foot. He almost kicks it away, but then changes his mind and picks it up. He lifts it to the level of his eyes and speaks to it.

"Well, it looks like we'll be together for quite a while"—he fumbles for a name—"Max. We might as well be friends."

Max looks at the pilot inquiringly.

"Oh, pardon my rudeness," the pilot says mockingly, "My name is David Socrates Crandell; all my friends calls me Dave, though."

He grasps the animal's tiny paw in his thick glove and shakes it; then he starts to put it down. Before he could do so, he hears a voice.

"Don't put me down," it pleads, "We can help each other."

DAVE LOOKS about the cave for the source of the voice. After a brief visual exploration, his eyes came again to the furry little creature that he has named Max.

"You?" the pilot says, unbelieving.

Max nods his little head in vigorous affirmation.

"Well," Dave says, "I've heard of telepaths before, but I've never had the chance to meet one. On *Arcturus II...*"

Before he could continue, Max speaks again.

"I have been appointed spokesman for the rest of my people"—he points a paw in the direction where the others huddle together in an expectant group—"to see if you could help us. We detected your ship when it first entered the atmosphere, and sacrificed one of us to bring you here."

"The one that I followed! But I

could have been killed in that stream!"

"That was a chance that had to be taken. After all, one of us *was* killed."

"I'm sorry," Dave begins, but Max interrupts him again.

"There is nothing to be sorry for. He would have died soon anyway. In fact, we all will die soon if you cannot help us."

"I'd be glad to help you," Dave says, "but I can't do very much where I am right now."

"We can get you back to your ship," Max replies and pauses to let his words soak into Dave's brain, "if you will promise to help us."

Dave thinks for a moment before he answers, there is really nothing to do but accept whatever terms are proposed.

"You keep saying, if I can help you. Just what do you need?"

Max speaks, and his words are far away, as if he were trying to recapture something that was lost forever.

"Once our race was great; we were the supreme beings on this planet. Our cities were spread far and wide, and our scientists had almost achieved space-travel. But this was long ago.

"For some reason beyond our comprehension, this world suddenly became cold. Almost overnight the snows that had been only far to the north swept down upon us, destroying our people and burying our cities. And a wave of pessimism came with the winds and the snows; mass-suicides were the results. Almost before the colds had reached them, whole cities were destroyed by the masses of the people; they who could see only disaster, and finally sterility for the entire planet. In their killings, they sought first those whom they blamed for this unpredictable treason of the elements; and in destroying them, the people wiped out their only chance for survival.

"Only a few of the scientists es-



caped, and we in this cavern represent the descendants of them. They brought with them the books that could still help to save what was left, but the shortage of materials necessary was their downfall. What little they had was used to sustain life here, but even that is almost gone. And we are faced with this situation. We have the books and learnings of our fathers, but they are as useless as the paper and ink that they are written with. If only we had the materials, the equipment, we could be great again."

HIS VOICE rises in pitch as he pleads for his only chance of survival.

"Even today, as we cast lots to see who would have to die that the rest might live a little longer, destiny, the gods, or what-have-you, sent you to us. And you *must* help us."

Then his voice returns to its original level as he concludes.

"But we do not even know if you

can help us. True, your race has achieved space-travel, but do you have the materials? And even if you do, would you help us? For I promise you that your gifts will not be gifts, but merely barter; we possess knowledge. And it is yours for—" he searches through Dave's brain for the proper words, "radioactive materials. We would not need much to heat this planet, drive back the snows to their proper places, and calm the winds to the docility that they once had. Come, search my mind, that you might see that I speak the truth."

He opens his mind, and Dave can see into it like the open pages of a book. He can see the once-great cities, reaching for the stars that they were denied so cruelly. And he sees the knowledge that was possessed by these creatures—knowledge that can be well used by any race, Mankind not excluded. For they had scooped deeply into the pool of mental sciences, and had come up with a pitchful of knowledge.

"I think that we need each other, Max; and I think that something can be done for your people."

THE PUTS Max down that the being might tell the news to its own people. After a few moments, there is a turmoil of excitement among them; the mental equivalent of a cheer reaches Dave's mind. It makes him feel good to know that he will play a part in the rescue of this race. He is still thinking thus, when Max returns to him.

"Come," the being says; "it is time to return to your ship."

"Which way do we go?"

"We go no way."

"But you said that we were going to return to the ship. Which way is it to the path that leads to the surface, through all of the snow and ice? That's one barrier that I think even you respect."

"Teleportation respects no barriers," Max replies.

And at the same moment, the scene in front of Dave's eyes changes from

that of the dark cavern to the white plains of snow. The rocket is now only a few paces from him, still resting on the sheet of ice; he can see his footprints leading away from the ship, but none returning. He lets out a whistle of astonishment, then speaks to Max, who stands on the ground at his feet.

"That's a neat trick; you'll have to teach it to me some day."

"I will teach it to you, and the rest of your race."

Picking Max up in his arms, Dave enters the ship. In a few moments, he has taken off his warm suit and sent it to the back of the ship to be taken apart. He sets the controls, while Max sits, watching; then he pushes the clothing-buttons and waits for a few moments. Max is astonished when Dave hands him a small replica of a crash-suit—with several modifications, that it might fit the tiny creature. When he finds out what it is, Max puts it on readily; then the two of them entered the crash-room.

With Max in his arms, Dave prepares to immerse both himself, and the little furry inhabitant of this celestial snowball, in the thick fluid. Before they enter, Dave speaks a few last words to Max.

"Yes, Max," he says, thinking of the many races that have been exploited by man; and of the great powers that he can have for a few pounds of rock, "I think that we can do a great deal for each other."

And, unknown to Dave, Max's thoughts are running along the same trail. To himself he thinks, "*For the knowledge of a science that is so simple, I can obtain riches beyond comprehension for my people.*"

Then the two of them immerse themselves in the thick liquid; the ship begins to hum, as the motors start. The ship rises on a pillar of fire, laughing at the winds and the snow and the ice that will soon be no more.



THE PHILOSOPHY OF SCIENCE FICTION

A Special Article

by James E. Gunn



Foreword



SCIENCE FICTION, once merely a sport of the pulp field, has in the last few years—to the somewhat complacent delight of its faithful and vocal adherents—become the fair-haired mutant of the popular enter-

tainment world.

The reverberations from the dropping of the atomic bomb have never ceased echoing through the land where the men are as intelligent as they are strong, and capable of facing a three-eyed alien monster and a beautiful blonde with the same unflinching courage; the reverberations have, indeed, been growing ever since, and science fiction has expanded with the mushrooming speed of the atomic cloud.

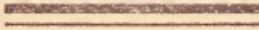
In the years succeeding that momentous date over two hundred science

fiction books have been issued in hard covers, eliciting reviews and critical summaries from such magazines as *Time* and the *Saturday Review of Literature*. In 1945 there were seven magazines devoted exclusively to science fiction; five years later there were fourteen; at the end of 1952, there are twenty, and the end is not yet—although here and there a magazine has been discontinued after a few issues. Science fiction stories have appeared in such "slick" publications as the *Saturday Evening Post*, *Collier's*, and so forth. Numerous radio and television programs have presented science fiction offerings, and Hollywood has become very much interested in the medium.

Nine major publishers at the last counting (Doubleday, Crown, Simon and Schuster, Dutton, Random House, Winston, Abelard, Vanguard, and Little, Brown) have started science fiction lines—not to mention a large number of small publishing-houses which deal with science fiction almost exclusively. Viking, Bantam, Pocket Books, Popular Library, Dell, and New

American Library, among the publishers of pocket reprints, have added their contributions. Several network radio programs, including "Dimension X" and "Two Thousand Plus," have at one time or another aired science fiction from coast to coast. And *Other Worlds*. (1.) listed almost fifty titles of movies finished, scheduled, or contemplated by motion picture studios. ("Rocketship X-M," "Destination Moon," the classic "Who Goes There?" by John W. Campbell, Jr., which Howard Hawkes released under the title of "The Thing", "The Day The Earth Stood Still; taken from Harry Bates' classic, "Farewell To The Master", and "When Worlds Collide", have been released, among others.) while *Publishers' Weekly* predicted that science fiction was due for a wave of movie popularity which might well supplant the westerns. (2.)

All this is very gratifying to science fiction authors and readers (especially to the authors), but it presents a very real problem to the development of science fiction. To those who know little of the genre, or are intent upon exploiting the lowest common denominator of its appeal, science fiction is merely a type of fantasy peculiarly interesting to the modern public. Ignoring, or unaware of, the development in science fiction's history, tradition, and philosophy, they represent the unfortunate possibility (already evident in many of the new presentations) that science fiction, under the influence of a mass-audience, may have to retrace its steps to a much less significant position than it occupies today or might occupy tomorrow. That position is integrally connected with the philosophy science-fiction has developed over the years.



TWO MISCONCEPTIONS are current about modern science fiction: that it is pure "escapism", and that it differs but little from that written twenty, two hundred, or two thousand

years ago. Both of these misconceptions are rooted in a complete, or comparative, ignorance of the modern field and have as their effect the shunting off of science fiction into the lower regions of the sub-literary, or into the limbo of the already-explored.

The fact of the matter is that science fiction may be escapism but it is certainly not "pure." As Leo Margulies and Oscar J. Friend remark in the introduction to their anthology, *My Best Science Fiction Story*:

Science fiction is the only literary escape which the bewildered citizen can seek that offers imaginative relief while keeping him in tune with the apparently insolvable problems confronting him and all his fellows. (3)

The word "escapism" has, of course, been so overworked that it has lost whatever meaning it ever had. Fundamentally, any and all fiction is "escapist" literature, inasmuch as it is a withdrawal from life—and this would apply to the works of Shakespeare fully as much as to those of Edgar Rice Burroughs. A distinction often made is the possible effect on the reader's life: the greater the effect, the less the escapist function of the literature. We can readily agree as to Shakespeare's effect, but it might be noted that even Burroughs' "Tarzan" or "John Carter" have certain ethical and moral standards which might make a mark on the life of a reader.

The factors which tend to remove literature from the "escapist" category may be classified as didactic, aesthetic, and philosophic. Almost any work will have one or more of these elements in some degree; it might be postulated, therefore, that there is no such thing as pure "escapism".

When one speaks of "escapism", then, one is referring not to category but to degree. And the degree is determined by the "usefulness" of the "non-escapist" elements of the material—although "usefulness" is another term which depends upon the individual critic. He may find a book's didacticism boring, its aestheticism revolting,

or its philosophy repugnant; but he must first assess these elements before he comes to a personal judgment.

In modern science fiction all three elements are present. We are not primarily interested in the didactic or aesthetic elements at this time. Didacticism certainly plays a large part, although it has been somewhat overstressed; and, indeed, a reader may find in science fiction much of the theory and technology necessary to orient him in this scientific age. Science fiction is not primarily concerned with aestheticism, although the aesthetic element is often present. It is subordinated, usually, to the reasonable element, which is the foundation-stone of science fiction today, as we shall see. Left to consider, is one of the most important elements; the philosophic.

Why the philosophic element in science fiction is important is readily apparent on an inspection of a few stories. Science fiction is a medium of ideas; at least nine-tenths, I would estimate, of all science fiction stories came into their authors' minds in the form of an idea, rather than with a character or a mood (Ray Bradbury, perhaps, is an exception). The authors, we might speculate, begin a story with such thoughts as: If such-and-such happened, or such-and-such was invented, what might result?

2

THERE ARE two significant but indefinite dates in the history of science fiction as a literary medium, one marking its beginning and the other its development into its present form. The first date might be set around 1830; the second, a hundred years later. The period bounded by these dates might be referred to, for purposes of convenience, as the romantic period of science fiction; the present period as the realistic. More will be said of these distinctions later, but first let us examine the patterns of pre-modern science fiction and then see

how they differ from those of the present.

Attempts have been made to trace the course of science fiction as far back as *The True History* and *Icaromenippus* of Lucian, a satirist of the second century A.D. These attempts can only be successful under a very loose definition of science fiction. Strictly speaking, the distinguishing mark of science fiction is a rational explanation (present or understood) for every plot-development or device included in the story which is distinguished from ordinary fiction by being about something which might have happened but did not (or is not historically recorded) or might happen but has not. In Lucian's work, as in most others of the fantasies written before 1830, the explanation may be present but it is not rational—the means of traveling used by Lucian or his hero were demonstrably impossible, even in Lucian's day (although it should be remembered that pragmatic tests are a relatively new development).

Before going further, it might be well to place science fiction in relation to other allied forms. As Groff Conklin notes in his introduction to *The Best of Science Fiction*, science fiction falls under the general heading of fantasy—which is itself a sub-branch of the species “imaginative writing.” Under “fantasy”, there are four primary types: the utopia, the supernatural story, the fairy-tale, and science fiction. (4.) This division is helpful; but at the same time, it is misleading. A science-fiction story can belong as well to any of the three types, depending on whether the story complies with the rational explanation consideration described above. If the story is of a utopia, there must be a rational explanation not only of how the society developed, but of how the newcomer—if present—came into contact with that society. If the story is a fairy-tale, there must be a rational explanation of the “why” and “how” of fairies, and of all other non-material elements. If the story deals with supernatural

forces, there must be a good explanation of ghosts, demons, werewolves. Otherwise, the stories are fantasy.

Various terms have been in favor for the category of literature I have called science fiction. J. O. Bailey maneuvers the unwieldy phrase "science fiction" through his critical work; (5.) the editor of one chain of magazines (6.) often shortens the Winchellish term "scientific fiction" to "stf." The writers' magazines refer to the genre variously: some lump it incorrectly under fantasy or invent an all-inclusive designation, "sci-fantasy." A few incautious, or unenlightened, commentators fall under the anathema of many science fiction devotees, including the editor of *Astounding Science-Fiction*, by classing the stories as "pseudo-science." As John W. Campbell, Jr., observes:

Science fiction is *not* pseudo-science. Pseudo-science is what the Sunday-Supplement features present. By definition, the term means false, imitation science, attempting to pass itself off as the genuine article. Science fiction is no more pseudo-science than fiction is pseudo-truth. Fiction makes no pretense of being truth; most books and magazines explicitly state, on the flyleaf or in the magazine indicia, that no such characters existed nor did the events actually happen. Science fiction is fiction, purely fiction, and makes no claim to be fact. But it does claim—and with provable truth—that many of its stories are extrapolations of known science into possible future engineering.... The general proposition of uranium fission was described in accurate detail in various stories published before 1941 ended. (7)

For one reason or another (among which are the way the phrase fits to the tongue and its incorporation into the title of *Astounding*), "science fiction" has become the almost universal designation for the genre (a slight debate about hyphenation remains) with only one or two recalcitrants still hanging back.

Before 1830, as Bailey illustrates in his book, the two main themes of the works of fantasy were "the wonderful journey" and "the wonderful machine," categories in which the emphasis, it may be noticed, is on the element of

wonder. There is no attempt to achieve probability or even possibility in such examples of "the wonderful journey" as Lucian's works—already mentioned—Cyrano de Bergerac's *Voyages to the Moon and the Sun* (8.) and Voltaire's *Micromegas*, (9.) and of "the wonderful machine" as Bishop John Wilkins' *Mercury; or the Secret and Swift Messenger*. (10.) These pre-science fiction tales of wonder derived their chief interest from the wondrous, fantastic qualities of the story or its details; the delight was in the wildness of the imagination. The principal purposes were satire, as in Swift's *Gulliver's Travels*, (11.) or wonder, as in Baron Ludvig Holbeg's *A Journey to the World Under-Ground*. (12.) But most of the novels in the genre, as August Derleth observes in his introduction to *Strange Ports of Call*, were predominantly utopian in character, "and for more than a century the science fiction novel was first and foremost a sociological novel." (13.) It might be noted in passing that the "Gothic" romances of the 18th Century had even less to contribute to the movement which culminated in modern science fiction; their mysterious events were presented almost always without explanation and were included entirely for their own sake.

3

SCIENCE FICTION as a distinct literary type probably began, as Groff Conklin suggests, about the time of the industrial revolution, although it would be difficult to pin down any one story as initiating the genre. It is not surprising that science fiction and the industrial revolution should be linked; it was about this time that it was forced on the attention of all thinking men that the world—a comparatively stable thing for many hundreds of years—could be changed radically, for better or worse, by the efforts of their hands and minds. And, if the world could be changed, what could be more interesting or profitable

than to speculate on the nature of these changes or what they might reveal about man, the earth, or the universe? Sensitive men (as most writers are) saw in the changes of the industrial age, however, nothing but evil—an attitude which was to influence the thoughts of the people, and the philosophy of a literature, for a hundred years.

This period is chosen as science fiction's beginnings because, more than anything else, it was about this time that stories began to be written as if they had actually happened or could happen—the indentifying consideration of a rational explanation for every plot-development. And in the beginning, the first of the three sections into which pre-modern science fiction divides itself, there were isolated men writing isolated stories, inspired individually and more by external circumstances than by any consciousness of writing within a literary movement. The second section began with the growing consciousness among those authors between the turn of the century and the mid-Twenties, who have been called the "elder statesmen of science fiction", that they were dealing with a new type of fiction and that they had a new medium—the forerunners of the modern pulps—in which to publish it. This consciousness grew more concentrated and more intense until it moved into the brief third section of science fiction's romantic period, that initiated in 1926 by the founding of the first magazine devoted exclusively to the genre, *Amazing Stories*.

When science, the tool and the prime force of the industrial age, first began to assume a broad, popular interest, the writers of the period were quick enough to capitalize on it. Among them was Richard Adams Locke—a friend of Edgar Allan Poe, and a reporter for the *New York Sun*—who, in 1835, concocted one of the most famous of the early science fiction stories. "Concocted"—because it was presented by the *Sun* as a factual scientific report

reprinted from the Edinburgh *Journal of Science* (defunct a few months before) announcing the discovery through a giant telescope of men and animals living on the Moon's sunward side. This long and detailed forgery, which came out under the title of *Great Astronomical Discoveries Lately Made By Sir John Herschel, LL. D., F.R.S., etc., at the Cape of Good Hope*, was later to be known as *The Moon Hoax* (14.)—but only after fooling, among others, a group of Yale scientists. Just beginning was the willingness—indeed, desire—of the people to believe in the never-ending miracles of science.

Locke's forgery inspired a number of emulators conscious or otherwise, including Poe (15.) and coming down through Orson Welles and his radio version of H. G. Wells' *The War of the Worlds*, but it never succeeded in establishing a particularly significant pattern. A hoax is by its very nature a one-shot affair. A recent and horrible example was a series of stories which ran in *Amazing Stories* until, to judge by comments in that and other magazines, reader protests forced a change of policy and, perhaps, editors. The series, authored by Richard Shaver and presented by the magazine with awe and trembling, swore to the actual presence of hitherto unsuspected degenerate, malformed "elder races" who controlled human thoughts and events through the misuse of ancient machinery in undiscovered caverns beneath the earth's surface. Becoming known as the "Shaver mystery," it capitalized on more or less mythological sources and suggestive sexual situations in an attempt to overcome hasty and often near-illiterate writing. (16.) It is a comment on the sacrosanct position some science fiction magazines feel they must assume, that the hoax was never publicly confessed, although it should be mentioned that other hoaxes—such as the Isaac Asimov article "The Endochronic Properties of Re-sublimated Thiotimoline," which was published in *Astounding Science-Fiction*—was freely admitted and enjoyed

for what it was. (17.) The "Shaver mystery," for what it may be worth, was probably the longest and most extensive example of the type to see print.

The stories of Edgar Allan Poe, running more to dark and mystic fantasy than to science fiction, started nevertheless, several trends which still persist. Among these are the scientific attack on non-scientific mysteries ("The Gold Bug"), the investigator trapped in his efforts to penetrate earth's secret places ("Descent into the Maelstrom"), the exploration of the hidden powers of the mind ("A Tale of the Ragged Mountains"), as well as the continuation of the adventurous-voyage theme already described ("...Hans Pfaall"). (18.)

One significant pattern, begun perhaps by Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley in *Frankenstein* (1817), (19.) began to establish itself as a predominant motif about this time: the theme of the mad, incautious, or unwise scientist who endangers individuals, a society, or a world through his experiments. With slight modifications, this trend produced a science which could contribute nothing in a moment of crisis. For humor it offered the inept, impractical, or absent-minded scientist. Name the authors of stories of this type and you would have (with a few notable exceptions) a roster of the science fiction writers up to the third decade of this century. Poe has stories in this vein, as does his contemporary Fitz-James O'Brien ("The Diamond Lens," 1858). (20.) After O'Brien, the numerous well-known writers who flocked to the genre as an outlet for their talents were almost all infected with this philosophy at one time or another: Jules Verne, Conan Doyle, Ambrose Bierce, Jack London, H. Rider Haggard, Frank Stockton, Mark Twain. The patterns of thought which produced this literature were symptomatic of the attitudes of several generations impressed by the iniquities of early industrialism and sighing for the "safe, sane, good-old-days."

The tradition of the villainous or dangerous scientist was not peculiar to the industrial age, of course. In a broader sense, it was an attitude inherited from the Middle Ages, when distrust of science and knowledge (influenced by the dictums of the Church) was even more widespread (of the Faust legend and its various interpretations); it was based on the firm conviction that science and knowledge—already threatening the stability of the society—were inevitably evil, and encroached upon the exclusive domain of God. It was the modification of this attitude, however, which came so near being the keynote of pre-modern science fiction that the plot and the character of the "mad" scientist became stereotyped.

4

THIS TYPE carried over into the second subdivision of science fiction's romantic period, the era in which the "elder statesmen of science fiction" dominated the scene and published their long, serialized novels in the old *Argosy*, *Black Cat*, *Cavalier*, *All Story*, etc. Such authors as H. G. Wells, George Allen England, Charles B. Stilson, Austin Hall, Homer Eon Flint, Garrett P. Serviss, Julian Hawthorne, and a number of others—remembered now only by initiates—presented as a dominant motif, either on its own merits or allied with that of the "mad" scientist, the theme of world cataclysm—the threatened, or actual, destruction of a civilization or a world. The causes were almost always external and unilateral: the machine which gets out of control; the sun which becomes a nova or grows cold; the cloud of poisonous gas, sun-obscuring dust motes, or meteorites which invades the solar system; the nomad planet which menaces the earth; the natural law which runs wild. The emphasis was almost always on the world-wide aspect of the cataclysm.

From the time that the theoretical possibilities of nuclear fission became

apparent, until the dropping of the atomic bomb, there was a sprinkling of stories of the atomic-cataclysm type; after Hiroshima, the sprinkling became so great a deluge that the theme was soon played out. At least one chain of magazines (21.) placed an editorial ban on all stories involving the threatened destruction of earth; and another magazine (22.) decided to stop printing stories about an atomic war. Today the theme is seldom seen, except in those pulpier of the pulps which go in for the orthodox adventure story with interplanetary trappings—now happily on the decrease—or else in greatly mutated form. The difference is this: when the cataclysm theme is used, the causes are internal and/or multilateral and the emphasis is upon its individual, not universal effects. In general, however, stories today concentrate upon the human effects of a small change in environment or conditions. Max Ehrlich's *The Big Eye*, (23.) describing the threatened destruction of earth by a wandering planet—despite its other merits—seems thematically naive, being outside and behind the main stream of modern science fiction.

Three authors, writing three different types of stories, stand out in this pre-modern period of science fiction, and are largely responsible for popularizing the science fiction novel: Jules Verne, H. G. Wells, and Edgar Rice Burroughs. The types of stories they introduced or brought into public acclaim have been defined, in that order, by John W. Campbell, Jr.:

1. Prophecy stories, in which the author tries to predict the effects of a new invention.
2. Philosophical stories, in which the author presents, in story form, some philosophical question using the medium of science fiction simply to set the stage for the particular point he wants to discuss.
3. Adventure science fiction, wherein the action and the plot are the main point. (23.)

Although the emphasis and the technique may change, these types still

sum up the field of science fiction today. It was not, however, to achieve a unity of effect or a distinct philosophy of its own until it won to the dignity of its own magazine. The honor of recognizing science fiction's possibilities and its popular appeal rests with Hugo Gernsback.

Gernsback, publishing a popular science magazine called *Science and Invention* in the mid-Twenties, began to insert a few science and fantasy stories. Faced by an enthusiastic response, he launched, in April, 1926, the first magazine devoted exclusively to the new medium (and one still being published), *Amazing Stories*. Moved out of control in a few years, Gernsback started two competitors which he later combined into *Wonder Stories* (now *Thrilling Wonder Stories*, although Gernsback left the field for good in 1936).

Of equal or even surpassing importance was the appearance in 1930 of *Astounding Stories* and its falling into the editorial hands of John W. Campbell, Jr., in the late Thirties. *Astounding* (now known as *Astounding Science-Fiction*), under Campbell, brought to science fiction a standard of competence and, at times, excellence of writing and the dignity of true scientific knowledge and of appearance (both symbolized by the emphasis of the "Science-Fiction" and the de-emphasis of the "Astounding" on the cover of the magazine). To the other magazines in the field, *Astounding* has shown the way, and they have—willingly or unwillingly—followed or are in the process of following. In *Astounding*, with a few exceptions, have been developed the outstanding authors in the genre; it has set the tone and established much of the philosophy of science fiction.

5

ABOUT 1930—a few years either way—I have set the date for the entrance of modern science fiction

upon the scene. About this time it slowly became apparent to the authors of science fiction that the industrial, scientific civilization was here to stay and that man must learn to live with it. While leading authors in the main literary stream were—and are still—yearning and sighing for a return to the safety of the ordered, static civilization where values were firm and fixed and there was no necessity for soul-searching or mental struggle (an obvious impossibility), the science fiction authors were searching for new viewpoints, for new values, for new answers to new problems. They found their basis—appropriately enough—in science.

At first their attitude amounted to near-idolatry; their attack was eternal: science—mystically, superstitiously—would provide the answer to the problems of yesterday, today, and tomorrow; progress was certain if science had its way (or was not thwarted by the non-scientific bias of mankind); the future was a rosy technological miracle. This attitude, evident as early as Edward Bellamy's *Looking Backward*, (24.) made its first appearance as a thematic trend almost coincidentally with the founding of science fiction's first magazine in such stories as Austin Hall's "The Man Who Saved the Earth" (25.) and reached its peak in the space epics of Campbell and Dr. E. E. Smith. The theme eventually—and fortunately—devolved into absurdity, both logically and as fiction. Phil Stong succinctly summed up the objections to these stories in the foreword to his anthology, *The Other Worlds*:

To me, E. E. Smith's "Skylark" stories...besides being clumsily written are as dull as ditch water, because there is no possible way for the hero to lose out. When the pilot of the Skylark finds himself in a difficulty he quickly works out a ray, formula, or dimensional trick which is more invulnerable—and if you think that "invulnerable" is not subject to modification you should read the stories—than the one that failed him. (26.)

Gradually the attitude died out—though it died hard and there are still evidences of it in current stories. It isn't hard to understand: pedestalled science provided as firm, as sound, as mystical a repository for faith as Henry James' stratified society, T. S. Eliot's Anglo-Catholic Church, or William Faulkner's pre-Civil War South. The search for values could be ended; the burden of responsibility could be shifted to other, broader shoulders. Naïve this attitude may have been, but it was one necessary step toward a significant philosophical content. There could be no constructive thought in science fiction while the one progressive element in its subject matter was viewed with alarm. The natural movement was the complete reaction: from the scientist as villain to the scientist as hero. But science fiction could attain no philosophic significance until its attack moved inward and it adopted the doctrine of human and individual responsibility.

After the failure of idolized science as a complete answer—a fact apparent in the physical as well as the literary world—science fiction adopted instead its present philosophical position: the scientific method; science as a means, instead of science as a goal. The implications of this shift were far reaching; it opened up entire new worlds. Where science fiction had been a fairly insignificant band in the literary spectrum, a segment entitled "explained fantasy" devoted to the condemnation or glorification of science, it became a literary medium with a mission, a tool in the hands of investigators into the possibilities of the human race. Instead of an attempted justification of science, it became the long-needed, and still not completely realized, conscience of science. Instead of descriptions of wonderful machines, it became a study of the complex relationship between man and the creations of his mind and hands. Instead of stories about the adventures of implausible heroes in strange, new worlds, it became a flexible device for the

analysis of the manifold aspects—past, present, and future—of the human spirit in contact with something new and vital. All these possibilities, of course, have not been realized; some of them have been attempted, some suggested, some hinted at, but all are potentially present in the medium at its present stage of development.

The scientific method is more than a technical device; it is a way of thought. It has been summed up by Campbell thus:

1. Gather all available data that is, or appears to be, relevant.
2. From the data, form an hypothesis.
3. On the basis of the hypothesis, make a prediction.
4. Experiment to check the validity of the prediction.
5. Vary the experiment and collect more data.
6. When the new theory breaks down, take the now collected data and formulate a new hypothesis.
7. Go back to step 3. (27.)

The scientific method has no place for absolutes or for authority; a theory must stand on its own merits, but it does not need to be true.

...A scientific theory is a useful tool; it need not be true so long as it is useful. Dalton's theory implied atoms were hard little balls; it was incorrect but it advanced chemistry. Therefore it was a good theory. (28.)

This is, of course, undiluted pragmatism, and pragmatism is the basic philosophy not only of science fiction but of the majority of science in the world today. It can be the only proper philosophy for a free, effective science; when the science is not free—as it is not in Russia—absolutes are possible, and the effectiveness of the science diminishes proportionately to the decrease in freedom (as many Americans are counting on in the armament race).

In fictional practice, this irreverent pragmatism results in such a story as Poul Anderson's "The Double-Dyed Villains," (29.) which poses the problem of administering and keeping the peace in a diversely populated and civilized galaxy. The sheer complexity

of administrative detail would be inconceivable, suggests Anderson; and with only one percent of the total population in the government service it would add up to about ten to the thirteenth power persons. Anderson's solution: a loosely organized Galactic League, in which the peace is preserved by a small patrol. Its members may not kill, but they go to all underhanded lengths—thievery, bribery, deception, blackmail, kidnapping, procuring, sabotaging, encouraging the narcotics traffic, etc. Dishonorable?—true, but it preserves the lives of countless billions of beings. As one of the members of the Patrol answers the objections of a victim that peace can be bought too dearly, that peace is not worthwhile without honor:

...."Honor!" he sneered. "Another catchword. I get so tired of those uncouth phrases—Don't you realize that deliberate scoundrels do little harm, but that the evil wrought by sincere fools is incalculable?...if we can't use force, we have to use any other means that comes in handy. And I, for one, would rather break any number of arbitrary laws and moral rules, and wreck a handful of lives of idiots who think with a blaster, than see a planet go up in flames or...or see one baby killed in a war it never even heard about!" (30.)

The "science" part of science fiction is usually justified on the basis of subject matter. But, to add another facet to the discussion, science is not only the subject matter of science fiction; it—or, to be more precise, the scientific method—is often (and in the best stories almost always) the technique used in story construction. The scientific method has been described above, and the same (if less tedious) pattern is used in fictional form: a new situation or phenomenon is encountered, the protagonist forms a hypothesis, checks it, and when the hypothesis breaks down uses that data to form a new hypothesis. Ideally, this forms a story as suspenseful as Campbell's "Who Goes There?"—in which an isolated group of Antarctic explorers must discover how to detect a non-

terrestrial monster able to assimilate any kind of protoplasm and imitate it perfectly.(31)



NOTES

1. July, 1950, pp. 152-156.
2. June 18, 1949, p. 2463.
3. New York: Merlin Press, 1949, p. viii.
4. New York: Crown, 1946, p. xix (hereafter referred to as *TESF*).
5. *Pilgrims Through Space and Time*, New York: Argus, 1947.
6. The Thrilling Group, which publishes *Startling Stories* and *Thrilling Wonder Stories* (hereafter referred to as *SS* and *TWS*) and others, *TBSF*, p. ix.
7. London: George Routledge & Sons, 1923.
8. London: George Bell and Sons, 1891.
9. London: John Maynard and Timothy Wilkins, 1641.
10. 1726.
11. London: T. Astley and B. Collins, 1742.
12. New York: Pellegrini & Cudahy, 1948 (hereafter referred to as *SPC*).
13. New York: William Gowans, 1859.
14. In *Short Story Classics*, New York: P. F. Collier & Sons, 1905.
15. "The Balloon Hoax" ("Astounding News by Express"), *New York Sun*, April 13, 1844.
16. For a fuller description and analysis of this series, see W. S. Baring-Gould, "Little Superman, What Now?" *Harper's Magazine*, September, 1946, pp. 285-287.
17. March, 1948, pp. 120-125. Confession, "Brass Tacks," June, 1948.
18. *The Complete Works of Edgar Allan Poe*, New York: Thomas Y. Crowell & Co., 1902.
19. London: H. Colburn and R. Bentley, 1881.
20. In *Short Story Classics*, New York: P. F. Collier & Sons, 1905.
21. The Thrilling Group—*SS*, *TWS*, *ASF*.
22. Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1949.
23. *TBSF*, p. vi.
24. Boston: Ticknor, 1888.
25. *TBSF*, pp. 668-703 (*Amazing Stories*, 1926—hereafter referred to as *AS*).
26. Garden City, N.Y.: Garden City Publishing Co., 1942, p. 9 (hereafter referred to as *TOW*).
27. *ASF*, May, 1950, p. 4.
28. *Ibid.*, p. 5.
29. *ASF*, September, 1949, pp. 6-30.
30. *Ibid.*, pp. 28-9.
31. Raymond J. Healy and J. Francis McComas (eds.), *Adventures in Time and Space*, New York: Random House, 1946, pp. 497-550.

(The final sections of this article will appear in our next issue.)



get at least one new name each issue. (And don't do as some magazines do: present a well-known writer under a pen-name and hail him as a new "find.") New names never hurt a magazine and often help it. About once a year, run a really long story—say a 60,000-word novel—perhaps magazine publication of a hard-cover book—prior to book publication. If you run letters, keep 'em short—not long-winded like this.

Well, RWL, you wanted views and opinions. You've got 'em. They may be cockeyed, but you've got 'em! Good luck with your new book—and I'll be haunting the newsstand for the next issue.

Yours truly,

Wilkie Conner, 1514 Boston Circle,
Gastonia, N. C.

(If the main object of the letter-department were to try to persuade the new reader that this magazine is really terrific—just look at these unsolicited testimonials!—then we would go for quantity in letters published, and length would have to be restricted. Now it is no secret that I love to hear how wonderful my magazines are, when the writer of the letter really feels that way; but I doubt that eight to ten pages of such ballyhoo makes for enjoyable reading. So I don't agree that letters should necessarily be short—but I'll let you readers call the shot, since this department is truly yours. Which shall it be, then—as many letters as we can squeeze in—making length-limits necessary—or my selection of as many interesting letters I can get in, regardless of length?)



The Lobby

(continued from page 68)

READER-PARTICIPATION

Dear Mr. Lowndes:

This is just a chat with you because I happen to feel like it. If you aren't in the mood for discursive rambling, your wastebasket is just to the right (or left) of your desk. After all, it's much easier to dispose of a letter than a bore who invades your office.

The urge for letter writing was brought on by your announcement of a new magazine *Dynamic Science Fiction*, in *Science Fiction Quarterly*. I'll buy it initially as a matter of curiosity. Probabilities are heavily weighted that I'll keep on, since you are the editor. Not throwing personal bouquets except in an indirect manner. Reading *Future* and *Science Fiction Quarterly* consistently, I've come to expect certain editorial performance from you in this field.

I read more than the average (if one places any dependence on statistics) and the science-fiction-fantasy field is the only field where I can name editors. This is, of course, the result of a general policy of reader participation in the editing—that's what it amounts to in a final analysis—and reader-identification with the editor, and his publication, as well as contributors, that is unique in the SF field. It throws a serious strain on my imagination to try to see a convention of readers of *Woman's Home Companion*. Pull in the women's magazine field if you like; my faculty for absurd fantasy is limited.

Suffice to say you're going to have a lot of readers suggest a lot of things. When you get through winnowing you may, or may not, have some sort of criteria for evaluating material for *Dynamic*. Here are my random thoughts for statistical files.

1. Title. Don't like. It has a hard, metallic sound for me, just a matter of personal semantics I suppose. Association-factor from old *Dynamic*, which I didn't care for. Even had Grandpa been a nice old buzzard, why name the infant Absalom? Too late to do anything about it though.

2. You have two magazines that follow a pretty well-defined formula. Why not experiment a little at least in *Dynamic* with yarns of that intangible genre exemplified by Bradbury? I agree with you that everything Bradbury writes isn't classic per se, but the very fact that he is so popular indicates a tendency in public reading taste for things in that general classification doesn't it?

Personally, I'll buy any magazine or book with Bradbury represented, because otherwise I might miss one of the really good yarns. His recent venture in editing in the quarter book "Timeless Tales" illustrates perfectly (for me at least) that there are other writers who could, and would, turn out this type of material if they could sell it. Mel Sturgis did that kind of thing in his story, "The Gift", in *Imagination* some months back. He told me at the convention in San Diego (where I met him for the first time) that he'd rather do yarns of that type than the kind he usually does, but he'd rather sell than write for his wife. Like an editor, I find it difficult to put into words what I want, but I know it immediately when I see it.

Tony Boucher is touching it in *Fantasy and Science Fiction*—which I like (sorry!) better even than *Future*. Which is commercially the more successful I don't know. It would be abstractly interesting to know press-run figures on both—not that the knowledge would change my opinion! You are in a position to evaluate this suggestion, (not press-runs—stories) as I realize that editors have to eat, and publications show a profit.

3. Departments. By all means a letter-department. Not that this is material for that section, but such a department is the yeast of the reader-identification with the magazine. A sense of being a part of, belonging, is fermented there.

4. Cover and illustrations. I prefer less lurid covers, but there I'm stopped by box office appeal. Like the sign on the side of a well trodden path over a lawn "Your feet are killing me" I can't argue.

Where the hell is that wastebasket? If not coherently, at least.

Sincerely yours,
Alice Bullock, 812 Gildersleeve, Santa Fe,
New Mexico, September 13, 1952.

(Well, Alice, our publisher, art-director, and your humble and obedient servant, spent quite a time considering possible titles for the new book, wore out a thesaurus or two

BROTHERHOOD WEEK

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in the process, had several different names lettered up to see how they looked, and so forth. *Dynamic Science Fiction* finally won out as the best available from the largest number of angles; some sounded better, but didn't read as well; some looked pretty, but seemed too esoteric for the general public; some naturals are already in use.... Now that we have it, I'm sorry it didn't appeal too much to you, and I know that there are others who agree with you; but it's my hope that the title will grow on you, as the magazine goes along.)

●

OPEN LETTER

The rapidly increasing popularity of tape and wire recorders has given rise to a new and most fascinating hobby—Tape correspondence or Wirespondence.

I'm an old-time science fiction reader myself, and it occurred to me that this hobby would be of special interest to my fellow readers, be they active fans or not.

This type of communication is definitely on the scientific side. It is the very latest and there is nothing else like it. It is a great boon to the many of us who carry on a heavy personal correspondence. By using "Talking Letters" instead of the old-fashioned kind you can triple and quadruple your present output of correspondence, and do it pleasantly, effortlessly.

Compared to most other hobbies, Tape-correspondence or Wirespondence is an inexpensive hobby. A good recorder costs no more than a good radio and, with ordinary care, lasts as long. Only a few tapes or wires are needed because each may be used hundreds of times and can be mailed anywhere for only a few cents.

Let this be clearly understood: I AM NOT TRYING TO SELL YOU ANYTHING, I AM NOT CONNECTED WITH THE RECORDING INDUSTRY, NOR DO I SEEK PERSONAL PUBLICITY OR FINANCIAL GAIN. IN SHORT, I HAVE NO AXE TO GRIND. I'm enthusiastic about tape-correspondence or wirespondence because I think it's a wonderful hobby, a hobby that I'd like to share with you.

Talking and listening to people from everywhere is a tremendous thrill, I know, because I've exchanged well over 1,200 "Talking Letters" with many people in this and 18 foreign countries. Although many of my friends live thousands of miles away, I know more about them, their families,

their work, their every-day affairs than I do about the people living in the next apartment. In fact, my "Talking Letters" friends mean just as much to me as do my personal friends of many years' standing.

In response to numerous requests I am now forming an organization, TAPE-RESPONDENTS, INTERNATIONAL. This is an association of congenial men and women who like to make friends by exchanging "Talking Letters" with people all over the world.

Membership is open to all. There is no obligation. Anyone who has a friendly disposition and a recorder (tape or wire) may join. Here is something new, fascinating, intriguing—something fine. A hobby? Yes, but we think it's much more than that, because the forming of friendships on an international scale can hardly be called a mere hobby.

Join T-R-I today! Get in touch with me by tape, by wire, or by letter. I'll be glad to have your ideas and suggestions.

Fred Goetz, 3488-22nd Street, San Francisco 10, California.

(The project sounds interesting, and I, for one, would like to hear about further developments.)

●

LET READERS CHOOSE

Dear Mr. Lowndes:

As a long time reader of *Future* I'm proud to have seen the birth of its two sister publications, *Science Fiction Quarterly* and now *Dynamic Science Fiction*. This means more opportunities for young writers a new showcase for undiscovered talent, an opening wedge for still insecure scribblers.

I sincerely hope the letters column in *Dynamic* proves to be one of intelligent controversy, subject matter not limited to "I rate 'Mrs. Snortpump's Pipes' first and so-and-so second." How about articles on new techniques in therapy? Why not take a readers' vote on their article preferences, then run pieces according to the tastes of readers? Would like to see thumb-nail, down-to-earth, up to date, articles on psychoanalysis, Dianetics progress (if any), exposes on various psychological quacks, write-ups on STF conventions and fanzines, every so often a listing of all, or as many as possible, fan clubs in the U. S. and elsewhere, so interested prospects can join and exchange scientifiction data and dope!

Be *Dynamic!* Pioneer! Use the best features in *Future* and *Science Fiction Quarterly* but don't be afraid to incorporate new ones, too. Want originality? How about short STF quatrains to break up the monotony of the pages or to be used as filler material at bottom of pages. Have regular fan club listings. When available present a "Dynamic First"—either an author who sells his first STF yarn, or one just getting started who never sold to you before.

How about a science fiction gossip column a la Winchell? What authors are selling what? New books out. Marriages. Births. Deaths. All related to fan interest. New fanzines. Anthologies. Hobbies of STF authors. Other interests. How about it? If interested I'd like to take a crack at it. Just give the O. K. and sample columns will be off to you.

Here's hoping that *Science Fiction Quarterly* has a *Dynamic Future!* *Future* is *Dynamic*. And *Dynamic* has nothing but a *Future!* Let's hear the "low-down" from Lowndes!

— Leo Louis Martello, 49 West 85th St., New York 24, N. Y.

(Frankly, I don't see this, or any other science-fiction magazine, as the proper vehicle for articles on psychoanalysis, or other forms of psychotherapy, and such arts. It should be borne in mind that while the best of these employ scientific methods, they are not "sciences" in themselves—at least, none of which I have heard.

This, however, does not bar interested readers from discussing these subjects in the letter-column. I have no objection to running letters on such subjects where there is a connection with science-fiction, or with any particular story we publish, if the letter fulfills my basic requirement of interest. I assume that a letter I, myself, find interesting will prove the same to a reasonable number of readers—just as with a story I consider good. Obviously, no matter what story or letter is run, some readers will think it good and some not so.

A number of letters have suggested that we run a "personals" or "gossip" department. I'd like to hear from more readers on this matter before deciding.)

in any of the other science fiction publications. I refer to Dianetics, or, as it is now to be called, Scientology.

There are, of course, a great many more or less elaborate newsletters, journals, and bulletins devoted exclusively to the subject; but these are not aimed at the casual reader, who, in fact, does not know of their existence, giving the entire movement a false, underground appearance through sheer lack of a popularly-written and widely-disseminated information source. This lack you are in a position to make up, if you will. Not only would you be rendering your readers and the world a great service, but such a feature would prove enormously popular with a great majority of your potential readers, who are interested in the subject but have no access to any late information. Daily I am rather more shocked than amused by the apparently prevalent belief among the people I meet that Dianetics is somehow dead or dying! — a belief that those who are active in the science are just too damned busy to do anything to overcome on any very large scale.

I believe that Del Rey would be a good man for the job; as I remember, he did an excellent, unbiased article on the same subject about two years ago. Actually Van Vogt would be a better choice, if he is not too busy to be approached, as he would be more qualified than anyone else but Hubbard himself; but I doubt that he could spare the time. Heinlein would be another possible choice; however, it shouldn't be at all difficult to find someone qualified to do the job, as most of the top men in the science-fiction field are either active or interested enough to do a good job—since Campbell, though still actively interested, no longer uses material on the subject in his magazine.

—Curtis D. Janke, 1220 N. 14th St., Sheboygan, Wis.

(See my comment on Mr. Martello's letter; I remain unconvinced that this type of "service" in the province of *Dynamic Science Fiction*.)

PAGING SCIENTOLOGY

Dear Mr. Lowndes:

In reference to the announcement of your new magazine *Dynamic Science Fiction*, I'd like to suggest that you include, if at all possible, monthly articles and reports on a specific science which is given no coverage

THOROUGH, THO ROUGH, ANALYSIS

Dear Mr. Lowndes:

I hope you can read this, illegible though it may be. I'm typing this at the office and have no other typewriter available.

[Turn To Page 118]

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DYNAMIC Science Fiction

I'm damned if I know how you rate. Since I quit writing 'letters to the editor' a couple of years ago, only twice have I written letters to any editor which dealt with magazine policy, and the stuff printed, rather than with some more specific and personal matter. And you've gotten both of them, despite the fact that neither one of your magazines comes close to being a great favorite of mine.

Perhaps it is because your editorial personality fascinates me. I am convinced that you are a terrific editor, and that your talents are smothered by "Policies".

But be that as it may, various things in the latest issues of *Future* and *Science Fiction Quarterly* have prodded me into writing this letter.

I found the news about your new publication interesting, though not particularly inspiring. With new SF mags appearing with the frequency of baby rabbits, it is not surprising that the STfan of today is rather bored by the whole thing—especially since the boom seems to have had the effect of drying up the fount from which the memorable "Classics" sprung; although the average quality of writing is higher, and there are far more readable stories than ever before, the stories are unmemorable.

I would muchly prefer combining *Future*, *SFQ*, and the new magazine into one monthly. I realize that Columbia feels they can sell more magazines by keeping three on the stands all the time, but I think they would find the reader identification which a monthly receives through its frequent appearance, constantly-changing covers, etc. would bring them enough new readers to more than defray the loss in unit sales. Not to mention which your editing would probably be better if you could concentrate on one frequent magazine in the field, rather than three infrequent ones.

Of course, what I'd really like to see you do is go pocket-sized, but I realize the expense necessary to the changeover, and that there is no insurance that the magazines would succeed. Both Popular and Magazine Management switched back after their brief experiments. But the pocket-sized magazine definitely is the coming thing in the SF field. In fact, one might say it has already arrived, since I believe there are now more magazines in the format (among SF publications) than in

[Turn To Page 120]

the old pulp dress, I know there are more issues per year appearing in this style due to the less frequent publication of most pulps. I'm no soothsayer where detective, western, love etc pulps are concerned and I don't particularly give a hang whether they live on in pulp format eventually, adopt some other format, or die. But of one thing I am sure... the pulp science fiction magazine must inevitably join the dime novel and the big-little books in deserved oblivion. It was a good vehicle during its time; it faithfully nurtured STF during its infancy; but today it is outdated, and sheer economic necessity will eventually force all pulp publishers of SF to adapt or abandon this field. I don't care about your magazines, but I *do* want to see you continue to edit SF.

But even a pulp monthly (probably named 'Future' since it's the best title of the three) would be better than these infrequent and indiscriminate publications. And I can't say I'm particularly fond of the new title. Wasn't that also the name of *Marvel's* old companion? I personally like the never, more conservative titles. How about a title such as *Nebula Science Fiction*, *Time And Space*, or *Into Infinity*?

However, you intimate the new magazine may be more of a quality production than your present pair, so you have my sincere best wishes.

As for suggestions, gladly. Like all science-fiction fans (as you doubtless remember) I am a frustrated editor.

Personally, I don't worry bout paper quality and trimmed edges. But this does have an effect upon many people and doubtless keeps yours sales down. So this is a vote for better paper, and most of all, a better printer as soon as possible. No vote for trimmed edges. I figure we won't get them till you go digest-sized anyway.

As a one-time job printer, now gone bankrupt, I can sympathize with your difficulties in obtaining paper, however.

What I would like in the magazine. It seems too obvious to state, but here it is: better stories. Of course, this brings up the matter of the competition and your rates again and I'll admit I have no solution. However, I'm happy to note that you no longer find it necessary to pay half a cent a word, and the latest issue of each magazine seems to show sufficient improvement in quality to indicate that the change is being felt.

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I think perhaps you limit your selection of authors (if it is you who is doing the limiting) too much. With writers like del Ray, de Camp, and Poul Anderson—I'm muchly in favor of your policy of buying their work in large quantities, since these men are good enough to keep your overall quality high, even with some of their poorer items. But other names also appear on your contents page over and over, without any such justification. Larry Shaw, a letter-writer par excellence, but not much of an author. I'll have to admit his "Captive Audience" was readable, though. Wallace West, a fine author who has unloaded his pet "Atlantis" series on you, much to my disgust. The first one was pleasantly different, when it appeared in *Astounding* in 1934, but the field has progressed somewhat since. Several others whom I object to—including George O. Smith, one-time prize hack in the Campbell stable. How you can criticize a craftsman such as Bradbury, then print those botched-up things of Smith's is beyond me.

You never use any Sturgeon, Fredric Brown, or John D. MacDonald.

Maybe you can't get these writers but surely such fine newcomers as J. T. M'Intosh, Walter Miller, and Frank Robinson can be had, if you try.

Your art staff could be improved upon in *Dynamic*. You once used first-rankers Finlay and Fawcette. No more. The nearest thing to a good artist now is Poulton—a second-rater, though I do notice one by Orban in one of the latest issues.

How about giving Eberle, currently doing much of *Weird Tales* work, a chance in the SF field. The guy is terrific, probably the best currently working in this field, and I believe his line work is clear and open enough to print on your paper. (Another topnotch newcomer is Freas, not to mention fan Jon Arfstrom.)

While we're on the subject of unfeasible ideas (at least I am, since I'm reading bits of your editorial as I write this) one of my pet ideas is illos printed in color. No, not three-color, nor even two-color à la *Blue Book* and *Fantastic*. What I'm thinking of, is a special press-run in which the illustrations would be just as they are now but printed in some special color, changing with each issue. There would be the cost of the extra press-run but your engraving cost would not be any higher, and it would do wonders in dressing up the appearance of the magazine and making it

more attractive. Of course that extra press-run is the stumbling-block. As an ex-printer I know just how those add to the expense, even on small orders.

New features? The only one I could think of would be a revival of one you used to have before the war—a fanzine (and perhaps fandom) review...don't flinch! Actually, there isn't a single good column of the sort in either professional or amateur magazine, at the moment. Rog Phillips, who impresses me as the Henry Wallace of STF, is far too saccharine and pollyannaish in his *Amazing Column*. . . . Besides it will probably be dropped, if the magazine goes digest sized as announced. His wife, Mari Wolf, hasn't the slightest idea how to conduct her column in *Imagination* and since Sam Merwyn left *Startling*, that column has been all sweetness and light also, as are all fanzine reviews of fanzines currently; what is needed is a hard-hitting column by someone who has at least some critical judgment, a moderate control of the English language, and no hesitation when the rapier-attack is called for—dishing out criticism in plenty when it is due, but also being generous with praise if called for. Merwyn did fine when he was writing these (Bixby still does ok by "The Frying Pan" but not by his reviews). Praise means not a thing unless it can be weighed against criticism. There is no satisfaction, in even the most fulsome praise, if one knows that everyone else draws equally strong encomiums, no matter what the merit; and there is little chance for improvement unless one receives criticism, and learns one's faults. Personally I quit submitting any of my publications for review some months ago. What's the point?

As to the current magazines, as I mentioned above they are definitely improved. I particularly like Jones' "Doomsday's Color-Press". This is perhaps the best story you've printed since "Martians—Keep Out" of which I have fond memories. (Why don't you get more Lieber? Preferably a full-length lead novel).

However, I'd disagree with Mr. Jones supposition that our opponents are using

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DYNAMIC Science Fiction

devilishly-clever propaganda in winning friends. That's what it appears on the surface over here; however, the evidence actually appears to point in the opposite direction. The Russians seem to be almost as inept at propaganda as we. They totally misguide reactions, and make a laughing stock of themselves. It is only our own stupidity and colossal blunders which drives our friends away, and makes us appear deserted. There is an excellent article in the current *American Mercury* dealing with this, which cites instance after instance in which we have gone out of the way to snub and criticize anyone who attempted to show friendless to the U.S., while cuddling up to anyone who was openly hostile.

But it was still a very entertaining story.

Russell's "Timeless Ones" was also entertaining, though much too short. I presume the people spoken of were Chinese, but whence the nickname "Miggies"?

The rest of the stories were mostly readable, but not memorable. This ranks as an improvement since I've been reading the first paragraph or so of each story, glancing at the rest, then passing on in nine cases out of ten, where your magazines were concerned, during the last year.

This letter has been anything but cosmic in import. After finishing it, and seeing what a sprawling epistle it has become I wonder what prompted me to write it in the first place and what could possibly be worth all that space.

I should close with something of great import to justify the letter but I'm afraid I have nothing more to say. Besides it is time for me to count my cash and close up.

But at least this gives you one more view at a facet of your readership.

—Vernon L. McCain, RFD No. 3,
Nampa, Idaho

(All things come to an end, so it's obvious that the "pulp magazine" will be a thing of the past, some day. Until that day arrives, we can expect the debate on how close the day is to continue, along with the great "cover" debate, and various others. Obviously, I can't concede your point so long as I'm editing pulp science fiction, any more than I can agree with anyone who might contend that Lowndes, himself, has been dead for years.

Many persons who did not care for some of the earlier George O. Smith stories have liked later ones; just as many who liked early Bradbury stories have thought less of later ones. In reference to Bradbury, I might add, I do not pretend to speak for

[Turn To Page 124]

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any majority—and wouldn't discuss him at all if I did not consider him worth it.

I'm not closed to any author; if you haven't seen some of your favorites in our pages, it is simply because we haven't received any material from them, or any material which we could use—not always a question of merit, either.

As I noted in *Science Fiction Quarterly*, I'm willing to consider a fan magazine review department if a sizeable percentage of the voting readers want it. ... And, trite as it may sound, I can only say that I'll take up the question of the artists you suggest with our art department. In some cases, the artist's residence is a determining factor—generally speaking, we have to rely upon illustrators who live in New York city, or its environs, or who live close enough so that they can come in on short notice.)



IT WILL GROW

Dear Mr. Lowndes:

I have before me your babe, *Dynamic Science Fiction*, a real healthy babe, too. I am sure that, just as a real baby, it will grow and take on a character all its own. Of course, a new babe brings a lot of new problems, but don't worry—you'll receive a lot of advice and suggestions from the fans, on how to bring this lusty infant up. I hope I am among the first to offer you congratulations.

Now let's take a look at the stories and features.

1. "The Einstein Rocket": Please, Bob, go easy on science. After all, we fans are not brilliant enough to understand what

$$p = \left(\frac{1 + \frac{v}{c}}{1 - \frac{v}{c}} \right)^{\frac{c}{2k}}$$

means. If you are going to print science articles, print them in a language the layman can understand. May I also suggest that you print articles that will appeal to the mass, and not the few boys who think they understand what is being said.

2. "Blood Lands": Coppel can usually be depended upon to write a good story. Although there was nothing sensational about it, I enjoyed it very much. I usually feel even if only one story in a mag is enjoyable it was worth the price paid. Amen.

3. "Blunder Enlightening": A well-told

{Turn To Page 126}

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straight "science article". I realize that the equations meant nothing to many readers—they didn't mean too much to me—but I found the article interesting and enjoyable apart from the equations, and hoped that most of the readers would, too. I don't intend to feature articles filled with figures and diagrams, as a rule, even if the majority approves of the general type this one fell into. But where the text holds by itself, then those masses of figures will say something extra to the reader who can follow them—something which cannot be expressed in words.

There's a theory that if you keep on doing your best, your "best" will improve; and I think it's true to a certain extent.)

NEATEST TRICK OF THE MONTH

Dear Mr. Lowndes:

The appearance of *Dynamic* didn't come exactly as a surprise since *Fantasy Times* headlined it in a recent issue.

I was surprised, however, at your frank and intelligent editorial. I only hope that you continue this sort of thing, letting us in on the little tricks of the publishing business.

One suggestion:

Quit using the review-columns of your magazines to castigate Ray Bradbury. You seem to have a consuming hate for Ray,

for some odd reason or other. The latest charge being "needlessly involved sentence structure and a wallow of ten cylinder words." This is absurd, as anyone who has ever read Bradbury can testify. Bradbury is doubtless the only writer of fantasy fiction with a fair chance to gain literary immortality and along you wander, Mr. Lowndes, and tell us to stop reading the slop Mr. B turns out. In the future, why not prefix your condemnations of Bradbury with a list of markets he's sold to. Or better still, the names of the colleges that use Bradbury's work to teach writing. And let's not forget the *New York Times*' opinion of Bradbury. Or doesn't that count?

The stories look good.

—Jack Gatto, 42 Oakland Avenue, Uniontown, Penna.

(Dear Mr. Gatto: You and I must have read two different editions of *Dynamic Science Fiction*, for in the one I edited, I stated on page 103 that Bradbury and Dr. Keller had much to teach those (authors) who were willing to learn. The "authors" to whom I referred were those who have been prone to "needlessly-involved sentence-structure and a wallow of ten-cylinder words." I mentioned no names except my

[Turn Page]



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DYNAMIC Science Fiction

own, admitting that a study of Bradbury's style could assist in correcting my own faults, were I willing to be taught the error of my ways.

I hope you haven't thrown away the copy of *Dynamic Science Fiction* you came across—the one wherein Bradbury himself is accused of this fault.

And I'd also like to see the issue where I told the public to stop reading his stories—or anyone else's, for that matter.

I wonder, Mr. Gatto, if you didn't find "castigation" of Bradbury in that review because you were looking for it—if you hadn't decided that any mention of him in my reviews, since I made some unfavorable comments previously, must necessarily be further slam. It's an easy state of mind for anyone to fall into, when one's favorite is criticized unfavorably; I have found myself doing the same thing, at times.

The facts are that I don't hate Ray Bradbury, nor consider *everything* he has written as bad. (No one could be that good, even Ray—or, if this seems too subtle, only superhuman ability could produce so large a quantity of material, all of which was perfectly good, or perfectly bad.) Cicero said of Cataline that it was the good in him that made him so dangerous. And if I had not found so much excellence in some of Bradbury's stories, I would not have been as distressed by the elements which add up to what I termed "adolescent rubbish" in others.

Nor is my opinion fixed, once and for all time—on Ray, or on any other author. I refuse to comment upon, or state an opinion on, a story I haven't read—and there is a fair amount of current material by Bradbury that I haven't read. When the opportunity arises, I shall read it, and my opinion will be based not upon former stories but upon the one or ones at hand. In fiction, one work does not refute another.

It is possible that, at a later time, I might find excellences that escaped me, in stories I now consider bad. This can happen to anyone whose reaction-patterns are not rigid and static. Should it happen, it will not happen because ten or ten thousand other critics sang loud praises of what I considered worthy of little praise, but simply because my viewpoint had changed.

I am perfectly willing to run a letter from you—or any other reader—who disagrees with anything I state in a review, and who wishes to show why what I thought bad is really good, or what I thought good is really bad. But I do not consider citing statistics as proof, or even as a valid argument. Using others' opinions to reinforce your own case, of course, is another thing and perfectly valid—when you have a case of your own to reinforce.

Finally, I do not hate Mr. Ray Bradbury, and—I think I said this once before—I remember his short story, "The Big Black and White Game", as one of the best I have read in contemporary fiction. RWL)

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• THE RECKONING

A Report on Your Votes and Comments

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Later returns on the article indicate that you do not want articles replete with equations and graphs — these were the two most frequent complaints of the Anderson piece.

We counted the votes, tallied the score, and it came out this way.

1. Knowledge Is Power (Fyfe)	3.33
2. "X" For "Expendable" (Balley)	3.94
3. Blunder Enlightenment (Dryfoos)	4.14
4. I Am Tomorrow (del Rey)	4.47
5. Public Enemy (Cressen)	5.05
6. Translator's Error (Dye)	5.10
7. Blood Lands (Coppel)	5.94
8. Ennui (Lesser)	6.55
9. The Einstein Rocket (Anderson)	7.70

We have eight items to consider, this time; please vote on the article, as this one is also an experiment.

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Number these in order of your preference, to the left of numeral; if you thought any of them bad, mark an "X" beside your dislikes.

- 1. SEA CHANGE (Judd)
- 2. SECRET INVASION (Kubillus)
- 3. LITTLE GREEN MAN (Loomis)
- 4. TURN OF A CENTURY (Blish)
- 5. THE POSSESSED (Clarke)
- 6. THE SEVENTH WIND (Dye)
- 7. WORLD OF ICE (Hernhuter)
- 8. THE PHILOSOPHY OF SCIENCE FICTION (Gunn)

Would you like to see more articles on science fiction?

Would you prefer to see more, but shorter letters in "The Lobby"?

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Which three letters were best, this time? (Name of letter-writer)

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

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